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PREFACE.

THE following Volume of Memoirs has been compiled at the particular request of the Church of Christ, late under the pastoral care of the eminent servant of God, whose reminiscences are herein presented to the Public.

To perpetuate the memory of one deservedly esteemed and deeply lamented among a large circle of acquaintance, is an object at once gratifying to the feelings of surviving friends, and coincident with the inspired testimony of Holy Writ, which declares *the memory of the just to be blessed*.

But the chief end sought by the publication of the accompanying Memoirs, is to promote the edification and comfort of the bereaved flock, and numerous friends of the deceased pastor, who "being dead yet speaketh" in the elevating and consolatory strains of heavenly truth, where-with, during a long and successful ministerial course, he diligently and devotedly laboured to build up the church of God in its most holy faith.

The retired habits and sedentary pursuits of the late Mr. Stevens, afford indeed but little, either of incident or of enterprize, to interest and engage the readers of biography in general; it is nevertheless hoped that the few authentic particulars, which were available for the purpose which has been sought by the compilation of this volume, will, to numerous readers, prove sufficiently interesting to render the publication a suitable medium and companion of hallowed recollections.

Embodied in the narrative of his life and ministerial labours, will be found notices of Mr. Stevens's valuable publications, a syllabus of some of which is presented to the reader, with a view of promoting their extended circulation among those who appreciate and love the discriminating and blessed truths of which he was a distinguished advocate.

The excellent and deeply spiritual Letters which form the most considerable portion of the Volume, will, it is hoped, compensate for any defect that may be perceived in the accompanying Narrative, either as arising from the deficiency of information supplied, or the imperfect manner of its compilation.

The selection which has been made from our departed friend's spiritual correspondence, will be found to present the great truths of the gospel in their doctrinal import, experimental sweetness, and practical influence. A fund of rich gospel treasure is herein opened to the view of the believing family of God; and the great facts of divine revelation are exhibited with a force and beauty, a diversity and adaptation, that at once demonstrate the richly gifted mind and eminent devotedness of the lamented Author.

That the perusal of the work may conduce to the consolation of the bereaved ~~church~~ at *Salem*, and further the interests of truth among the Lord's ransomed people, is earnestly desired; and should the glory of God in any measure be thereby promoted, his name shall have all the praise.

THE COMPILER.

MEMOIRS
OF
MR. JOHN STEVENS.

"High worth is elevated place: 'tis more;
It makes the post stand candidate for thee!
Makes more than monarchs, makes an honest man;
Though no exchequer it commands, 'tis wealth;
And though it wears no riband, 'tis renown;
Renown, that would not quit thee, though disgraced,
Nor leave thee pendant on a master's smile."

YOUNG.

IN the church of Christ, as well as in the world, there have been numerous instances of individuals emerging from the shades of humble obscurity to eminence of character and station, whose distinguished qualities have appeared little dependent on the contingencies of birth and education, and whose excellencies have been radiant with a lustre that can never be derived from the mere adventitious aids of scholastic attainments or academical advantages.

In every age, God, in infinite wisdom, has raised up men, whose qualifications to sustain a prominence in his cause, and to defend his truth, have been manifestly derived from the supernatural influence and superior gifts of the Holy Spirit, which, combined with a high order of natural endowments, and the strength of moral integrity, have elevated the possessors of such distinctive favours, fitted them for posts of eminence and honour in the church of Christ, and qualified them "to speak with the enemies in the gate." Among those whose lengthened service in the gospel of our Lord has been signalized by distinguished ability, uncompromising fidelity, and a valiant defence of the cause of truth, was the subject of the following brief memoir; whose faithful and valuable ministrations have been a source of spiritual edification and delight to multitudes of the ransomed of the Lord, many of whom still survive to

mourn the loss of a faithful under-shepherd, and a more than ordinarily gifted servant of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Mr. John Stevens was born at Aldwinkle, Northamptonshire, June 8th, 1776. His parents moved in an humble sphere of life, but were nevertheless esteemed as persons of honourable reputation, and as sustaining a profession of godliness among their friends and neighbours. His father, Isaac Stevens, was the son of Mr. —. Stevens, of Wadenhoe, a village situate about a mile from Aldwinkle, where, pursuing the lowly occupation of a shoe-maker, he was also a partaker of "the heavenly calling," and not unfrequently employed himself in making known the way of eternal life to others. It appears to have been to our departed friend a truly pleasing reflection, when, on a recent occasion, alluding to his grandfather, he writes,—“My father’s father was a truly godly man, and was in the habit, at times, of praying and expounding the scriptures to his neighbours.” Mr. Isaac Stevens was married to Miss Everitt, daughter of Mr. Everitt, a respectable butcher at Aldwinkle, to which place he went to reside on the occasion of his marriage, and established his trade as a Shoe-maker, by which he was enabled for several years, by industrious habits, to meet the claims of an increasing family. His son *John*, the subject of this sketch, was the eldest of *ten* children, of whom *five* still survive, viz., *Thomas, George, David*, and two *daughters*, the remaining branches of a favoured family, and who, it is believed, are partakers of that grace which so conspicuously shone in their gifted and honoured brother, through the years of his pilgrimage and successful labours in the cause of Christ.

Of events relating to the earliest period of John Stevens’s youthful days but very little is known; and it is chiefly from information supplied by two or three aged persons still resident in the vicinity of his birth-place, that the only authentic particulars connected with his boyhood can be ascertained. These, though in themselves insignificant and unimportant, may nevertheless by many be regarded of sufficient interest to claim for them a passing notice.

He is remembered to have resided, during several years, with his maternal grandmother in his native village, whose ardent and devoted attachment his dutiful behaviour soon permanently secured. Appreciating the advantages of an early education, Mrs. Everitt sent him to the best school

in the village, constantly enforcing on the attention of her beloved child the important advantages of mental cultivation, and frequently remarking to him, that "learning and knowledge were better than houses and lands." His tender mind was truly susceptible of the desired impressions, and he very early evinced an aptitude to receive instruction, which indicated the possession of a mind of no ordinary capacity. The advantages of such a school, as may be supposed, were very limited; he therefore soon got in advance of his instructors, and in the absence of any further educational privileges, he applied himself diligently to every means of self-improvement, and thus, doubtless, he acquired that studious habit of mind which so eminently characterized him through all the subsequent periods of his life. Nor did he cease to cherish, with the most affectionate veneration, the memory of his beloved grandmother, who had, at a considerable sacrifice of personal comfort, conferred upon him such lasting benefits, and by the influence of whose instructions were imparted and fostered those principles of moral greatness which laid the foundation for his future honourable course and public usefulness. Careful also to instil into his mind habits of industrious and useful occupation, employment was assigned him in the requisite attendance upon his grandfather's cattle, and in other departments of a rustic life. The individuals to whom reference has been made as now living at Aldwinkle, were among the play-mates of John Stevens, who still retain a vivid recollection of incidents of too common and trivial a nature to be at all interesting were it not that the intervening period of three-score years cannot dissociate them from the MAN to whom they relate, while they exhibit a by no means unpleasing contrast to the subsequent events of his history. To attend his grandfather's horse and milk the cow, were employments in which young *Stevens* was customarily engaged. One of his early associates cherishes the recollection of having been taught by him the useful *art of chopping sticks*; while others with a no less laudable pride, boast of his companionship in the juvenile sports of the village, and have frequently been his competitors for the *honour* at stake upon the issue of a game of marbles! It is gratifying, however, to record the uniform testimony of his early companions to the strict morality of his youthful days, and the general exemplariness of his conduct at

this period of life. He mingled comparatively but little with other youths in their playful pursuits and rustic gambols, but preserved a steadiness of habit and conduct that appears to have gained for him the general esteem of the village. At a subsequent period he became employed in his father's occupation, in whose shop he for a considerable time pursued that calling, with an intention, it is presumed, of becoming permanently established in the business; but the Lord had work of another kind for him to be engaged in, and the events of this period were conspiring to make this manifest.

The family of the Stevens's and their connections were regular attendants at the parish church, to which place, consequently, John Stevens was accustomed from his early childhood. The Rector of Aldwinkle at this period was the celebrated Doctor Hawies, the author of the "Church History," and many other works. He was truly a man of God, and one of the very few in that day who preached "Christ and him crucified" in the pulpits of the Established Church. The Doctor was much beloved by George Whitfield and Lady Huntingdon, and was one of the preachers in her Ladyship's connection for several years, until his death. If not so celebrated for talent as some of the clergymen in that connection, he was very greatly admired for the fervour, simplicity, and spirituality of his ministry. It was under the ministrations of this excellent man that *John Stevens* first evinced, at an early age, the inward power of spiritual life and true godliness. He had been the subject of serious impressions from his early childhood, and when but a youth his mind on one occasion became more than ordinarily affected under a funeral sermon preached for one who had died very young; a circumstance still remembered by a brother of the deceased youth. But little, however, is known of the spiritual exercises of his mind at this period, except from his own pen. The following reminiscences of his early impressions were written about a year previous to his death, and are transcribed from the Gospel Herald, for November, 1846.

"It pleased the Almighty to notice me when very young, and to cause me to consider my latter end. He caused me to muse on eternal things, with a mixture of hope and fear; especially on the impressive subjects of death and the grave, of hell and of heaven, and of the end of the world, and of the day of judgment. The idea of the certainty

of these things taking place, and of the probability of death's overtaking me before I was prepared for the serious visitation, at times affected my mind with a dread of the future. Sometimes these subjects wrought on my imagination in dreams by night, when I have thought that Satan was pursuing me, to put a yoke upon me; and once I imagined he had seized me, and was flying away with me, at which I was greatly troubled, and made several efforts, as I thought, to say the Lord's prayer, apprehending that, if I could but succeed in so doing, Satan would be constrained to drop me, and I should escape from his power. I often felt convictions and stirrings of heart under the word, especially when the important subjects just named were set forth, and I was led to meditate on the punishment of the ungodly, and the happiness of the righteous. I felt a great regard for those whom I supposed to be the people of God, and who were going to heaven; especially some ministers that I was favoured to hear. I was in the habit of going to church every Lord's-day, and often on a week night. But private prayer was my chief medium of enjoyment and satisfaction: to this I usually attended repeatedly in the day, by the hedges in the fields, or in any place where I had opportunity. I was much encouraged by musing on certain hymns, that I used to repeat while at my work. The exercises now alluded to, took place about five and fifty years ago. The remembrance of those early days, is still at times made sweet and profitable. I had peculiar thoughts and feelings from my childhood, which seem to indicate a latent principle of holy tendency in my heart. I had a strong dislike to the company of profane persons, though I could not avoid it. As to the sin of my nature, I, at that time of boyhood, had received no conception; but, as years increased, and reason became strengthened, and my judgment further informed, my sinfulness also became known and felt. I discovered my disease by the use of my remedy. As light shined into my heart, its evil qualities became detected, lamented, and abhorred. It is light that makes manifest darkness: Eph. v. 13."

The period to which the above reflections refer, was when he was about fifteen years of age. His convictions of sin and guilt were deeply rooted, but his conceptions of a Saviour were dim and beclouded. His sincerity was unfeigned, but his sanctity did not so manifestly arise from those hidden springs of life in Christ Jesus, which afterwards became in him a well of water springing up into everlasting life. The Holy Ghost had already wrought powerfully on his heart, but the manifestation of free forgiveness in the clearer development of the mystery of redemption was reserved for a future period, when light should manifest darkness, and guide his feet into the way of peace. The subjoined extract from one of his letters, written thirty years ago, is expressive of the true state of his mind at the time to which it relates:—

"He took me under his unexpected tuition, when a poor illiterate boy in an obscure village. My morals had not been practically depraved, but my mind was enveloped in ignorance, and my untried nature the residence of every vice. Early he taught my clouded spirit to attempt private visits to his celestial throne. I lived and loved, I worshipped with all my heart; but it was merely the break of day, when first I sought his face, and hoped to find remission."

In the progress of events, and when about sixteen years of age, his steps were directed to London, whither he was induced to proceed to seek improvement in his business as a shoe-maker; and here, it is presumed, commenced his connection with dissenters. The circumstances which led to this important event are not fully known, but his removal to London brought him into connection with some persons "called dissenters," to whose principles he felt greatly opposed; and being a very zealous churchman, he imagined it would be a perfectly easy matter to set those mistaken people right. In order, therefore to accomplish this, he diligently searched the sacred Scriptures, to fortify himself with arguments against the schismatical pretensions of the nonconformists, but, to use his own words, *the more he laboured to prove them wrong the more deeply he became convinced that they were right*; consequently, he was very soon constrained to cast in his lot amongst them. He was directed in the providence of God under the ministry of Mr. Richard Burnham, pastor of the Baptist church, Grafton Street, Soho, where for a short period he found a home. He was baptized by Mr. Burnham at a small chapel in *Edward Street*, and was received a member of the church at Grafton Street, where he attended the ordinances of God's house with increasing delight, and derived much profit and edification from the ministry of the word. He appears to have been not very long in connexion with the church before he *first* attempted to speak in the name of the Lord; but it is regretted that the earliest exercises of his mind in relation to the work of the ministry are but imperfectly known. His first efforts, however, appear to have received the encouragement of his pastor and fellow-members, by whom he was induced to attempt the exercise of his gifts; whether by the regular appointment of the church is uncertain; but in the first instance he *failed*, and was obliged to retire into the vestry, without saying anything. This unfavourable circumstance probably would have

effectually discouraged him, but his pastor, who is remembered to have been an exceedingly kind man, immediately followed him, and consoled him under the mortifying disappointment, saying, "Never mind, John; try again." He was encouraged, and enabled to do so, and soon acquired a freedom and boldness of utterance that indicated the possession of no ordinary aptness to teach. He continued preaching, by the request of the church, on Wednesday evenings, until he eventually received their full sanction in any future and more extended ministrations in which he might be directed to engage. It was in the year 1795, when but nineteen years of age, that he was thus sent forth to preach the gospel as the providence of God might open a door of usefulness to him. The singular and promising talents discovered in those early ministerial exercises appear to have impressed his pastor's mind with the conviction that he would prove no ordinary character, and that he was designed to fill some eminently useful station in the church of God; for when he soon after left his friends at Grafton Street, Mr. Burnham observed in reference to the character of his talents, "He will prove a peculiar preacher to a peculiar people;" and he added, perhaps under the influence of some jealous feeling, "but into my pulpit he shall never enter while I live." After about three years' residence in London, Mr. Stevens returned into the country, and again took up his abode with his family in his native village. It is probable that this removal was with a direct view of preaching the gospel, at least for a time, in that immediate neighbourhood; for there, among his friends and early acquaintance, he soon after became employed in proclaiming the glad tidings of salvation, which he frequently did both at Aldwinkle and the adjacent villages. Vast numbers flocked to hear the youthful preacher, whose peculiar and extraordinary abilities attracted continually increasing interest and attention, and not unfrequently persons came many miles to attend his preaching. His first sermon was delivered at the dwelling-house of his grandfather at Wadenhoe, in the year 1796, concerning which he himself thus writes:—

"It is now about fifty years since I first attempted to speak to the villagers, among whom I was born and brought up, of the things I had heard and believed. My father's father was a truly godly man, and was in the habit, at times, of praying, and expounding the scrip-

tures to his neighbours. In his house, and at his desire, and at the request of other friends, I ventured to make an attempt to declare what I knew of Christ, and his great salvation."—*Gospel Herald*, November, 1846.

During this and the following year, his village labours were frequent and extensive. At Aldwinkle, Wadenhoe, Woodford, Rushden, Thrapstone, and Great Catworth, he was accustomed to lift the standard of the cross, nor did he at this early period of his ministry labour in vain. His preaching was with power; the native strength of his superior mind manifested itself in the originality of his thoughts, and the force and fluency, energy and ardour with which his conceptions were expressed. God was with him in his work, and seals were given him to his ministry. Many persons were converted to the faith of Christ through his instrumentality, and the word of the Lord had free course and was glorified. To the writer of this sketch he once humorously observed, in reference to this early period of his ministry, "When I first began to speak I was a sad *blunderer*," but I sometimes think that a greater blessing then attended my *blundering* than has since marked my more orderly attempts in the work of the ministry."

Among the occasional auditors of young Stevens at this period was the venerable Rector of Aldwinkle, the excellent Dr. Hawies, who, though not pleased with his young parishioner's nonconformity, nor willing to countenance his secession from the Church of England, would nevertheless sometimes stand outside the house, by the window, and listen with surprise to the strains of blunt eloquence in which the gospel was proclaimed, and instruction imparted to the humble villagers, by one who had risen up amongst them, and who, until a short period, had sat at his own feet a sincere and humble enquirer after the way of life and salvation. The good Doctor's intimacy with Whitfield, and his association with Lady Huntingdon and the preachers of her connexion, would be likely to relax the rigidity of his ecclesiastical principles as a clergyman of the Established Church, and enable him to appreciate and form a just opinion of the qualifications of *John Stevens* for the work of the ministry. That opinion he frequently and unequivocally expressed, and sometimes when listening to him, he has been heard to say, "I wish Charles" (meaning his own nephew) "could preach like that!" Indeed the Doctor so highly appreciated

the talents and piety of the *village preacher*, that he made him proposals to procure his admission to the University, with a view to his introduction as a preacher into Lady Huntingdon's connection. His profession of the principles of the despised Baptists appeared the only barrier to his promotion; this, however, Dr. Hawies sought to remove, and endeavoured to persuade him to obviate that difficulty by relinquishing his Strict Baptist principles, alleging the *unimportance* of the point, and other equally fallacious arguments, in favor of his compliance. This inducement, held out to him at a time of life when the pulse of ambition beats more or less in every breast, produced no other effect than to inspire him with indomitable courage and zeal in the defence of those principles to which he had given in his adhesion, and from which no prospect of worldly promotion or popular favour could cause him to swerve. That unbending moral integrity which characterized him through life, and a supreme regard for the interests of *truth*, rendered him impervious alike to the assailments and the solicitations of error. Positively refusing to sacrifice his own conscience and the truth of God at the shrine of Pædobaptism, the way to his proffered advancement was abruptly and significantly closed upon him by the laconic reply of the kind-hearted Rector, "*Then I can do nothing for you.*" This termination of the affair, however, was not regretted by our departed friend, who had never coveted the distinction which the Doctor sought to confer upon him. Nor did it prevent his cherishing the highest regard for his memory to the latest period of his life. For Mr. Stevens's family Dr. Hawies appears to have entertained a sincere respect; they were all of them particularly fond of music, and cultivated that delightful science with gratifying success. After the removal of the family to London, the Doctor was preaching at Zion Chapel, Whitechapel, where he ascertained the presence of the Stevens's family by the melody of their voices in public worship, and afterwards sought an interview with them. The Doctor himself was fond of music, and was the author of many beautiful hymns, several of which may be found in the Selection published by Mr. Stevens, some years afterwards, for the use of his own congregation.

The time was now arriving for the itinerant labours of Mr. Stevens to be succeeded by ministrations of a more stated and regular character. He was invited to preach at

Oundle, to a few people who there met for the worship of God, some of whom had heard him at Aldwinkle, and were solicitous that he should make them a visit, to which he consented, and preached his first sermon there on Tuesday evening, July 4th, 1797, taking as his text, Isaiah xlv. 13. This visit was followed by others, during which his ministry was well received; and the people at length invited him to come amongst them, that they might be favoured with his regular ministrations, to which it appears he subsequently acceded.

About this time, Mr. Stevens entered into the marriage relation, an event which proved a source of much happiness to him for many years. The chosen companion of his youthful days was Mrs. Armstrong, a respectable widow, and a member of the church at Grafton Street, in whom he frequently acknowledges himself to have been greatly blessed during her life, and who appears to have been well qualified for the station to which such a connection introduced her.

At this time there had been no church formed at Oundle, but the people were exceedingly desirous that Mr. Stevens should minister unto them the word of life. They consequently renewed their invitation, which was accepted, and on the 19th of November, 1797, he commenced his labours among them, preaching on that occasion from Judges iii. 26, "I have a message from God unto thee." Here his preaching was blessed to many souls, and the people felt an increasing attachment to his ministry; but this was not the place of his rest. The Lord was evidently preparing him for other and greater spheres of usefulness, by the increase of his gifts and the clearer discovery of the truth as it is in Jesus. After preaching upwards of two years at Oundle, with a good measure of success, he closed his ministry there on the 6th of October, 1799, to "the great grief of the people," who about two years after this period were formed into a church, which continues until this day, the remote result of our departed friend's early labors. It is worthy of remark that Mr. J. Wade, one of the present deacons of the church at Oundle, heard Mr. Stevens preach in his grandfather's house at the commencement of his ministry, in the year 1796.

It was during his residence at Oundle that his views of divine truth in some respects underwent an evident change.

The great doctrine of the atonement, although the foundation of his hope and the substance of his ministry, had been hitherto regarded as presenting a *general* aspect of mercy towards the world at large; consequently his views of that doctrine, together with the obligatory nature of spiritual repentance, and the ministerial use of gospel invitations were generally in accordance with the principles of what is denominated "moderate Calvinism," and which had been reduced to a *system* of doctrine and duty by the late Andrew Fuller. He never, indeed, entered *systematically* into Mr. Fuller's views of the atonement, but the *essence* of a yea and nay gospel was virtually incorporated in his ministry, though at that time he would have disclaimed as any part of *his* faith some of the more barefaced, unscriptural tenets, which he afterwards so triumphantly refuted. With a mind, however, singularly endowed with capabilities of thought and penetration, and fired with an ardent desire for the attainment of truth, it might be expected that the agitation of the question relating to the extent of the atonement, and the duty of the unregenerate, would arouse *John Stevens* to an investigation of the subject. Such was the case, and thereby he was led more fully to discover the sovereignty, certainty, and harmony pervading all the saving acts of a Triune Jehovah; the definite and absolute character of the atonement; the root of spiritual obligation, as distinguished from the principle of moral duty; and the necessary existence of *spiritual life*, as the result of *sovereign favour*, in order to the equitable requirement and due performance of spiritual acts.

Such, in brief, were the principles of divine truth in which his mind became thoroughly established, and it is perhaps not too much to say, that the enunciation of those principles imparted to his ministry, throughout the subsequent period of his life, a peculiar complexion of thought, a tone of lofty decision, a perspicuous view of harmonized truth, and a diversified method of illustration, which eminently distinguished him as a preacher of the gospel of unconditional grace and salvation.

The change thus occurring in his views of divine truth, was not a little facilitated by his friendly acquaintance, at this period, with *Mr. Whitmee*, a Baptist minister at Great Gidding, Northamptonshire, who is reported to have been a godly man, sound in the faith, and a preacher of the

discriminating doctrines of the cross. Though possessing inferior abilities as a preacher, and but little known beyond the sphere of his stated labours, he became usefully instrumental in teaching his young friend the way of God more perfectly, and greatly assisted him in his inquiries after truth. This, Mr. Stevens ever afterwards gratefully acknowledged, and when he subsequently entered the field of controversy, and opposed the sentiments of Mr. Fuller, relative to the universal duty of saving faith, and the indefinite character of our Lord's atonement, he not unfrequently, during the progress of his work, corresponded with and consulted Mr. Whitmee on the subject, which first employed his polemical powers.

The labours of Mr. Stevens having been brought to a termination at Oundle, his steps were directed in the providence of God, to St. Neots, in Huntingdonshire. Here, as at the former place of his ministry, there existed at that time no Baptist church; but a few of the Lord's people were accustomed to assemble in a private house for worship, chiefly for the reading of the word of God, and prayer; occasionally being favoured with the preaching of the gospel, when any of the Lord's servants could pay them a visit. Mr. Stevens had once or twice visited them for this purpose, which was followed by an invitation from the people to come amongst them, and his acceptance of the same. It is probable that the recent change in his views of divine truth, might have some influence upon his mind in directing him to this new sphere of labour. The people at St. Neots joyfully received his testimony, and regarded his entrance among them as a manifest answer to their prayers. He commenced his regular ministry with them on Lord's day, October 13, 1799, and it soon became evident that the hand of the Lord was with him. The people were greatly edified by his ministry, and many were gathered under the preaching of the gospel of distinguishing grace, which to some became the power of God unto salvation. Encouraged by these favourable circumstances, the people desired to unite in the fellowship of the gospel, and in the following year, a christian church was organized, according to the principles of the New Testament, and Mr. S. received an invitation to become their pastor, to which he acceded, and was publicly recognized in that office, October 1, 1800; on which occasion, Mr. John Grinder, of Ringstead, delivered

the charge to Mr. Stevens, from Jer. iii. 15; and Mr. Lee, of Over, addressed the church from Acts xi. 23. The infant church greatly prospered under the ministrations of their beloved pastor; the word was greatly blessed, and many were the instances of the power of sovereign grace, in the conversion of sinners to God through his instrumentality. Here, also, the energies of his powerful mind became more fully developed in the exercise of his ministerial gifts. Even at this early period of his ministry, *John Stevens* was no superficial preacher. Endowed with peculiar qualities of mind, possessing in no ordinary degree the spiritual gifts of the Holy Ghost, devoting himself entirely to his Master's work, and rendering all his pursuits subservient to the great object of his ministry—the exhibition of Christ and him crucified—his discourses were replete with gospel truth; his manner of address was dignified and commanding; his method of illustrating the great themes of the gospel was peculiarly forcible, and his depth of penetration into the mystery of godliness, was remarkable in one so young, and possessing no other literary qualifications for his work than those acquired by his own studious and persevering habits. Under such a ministry, the little church at St. Neots was signally favoured, during the first few years of its existence, nor has the influence that ministry shed, or the advantages resulting therefrom, yet disappeared, now that the “little one has become a thousand, and the small one a great nation.” During the period of Mr. Stevens's pastorate at St. Neots, which was scarcely extended to the term of *five* years, considerable accessions were made to the infant church, which at the close of his ministry, had increased to *seventy-three* persons, and the congregation had become greatly enlarged. In the order of divine providence, however, circumstances occurred, which led to his removal from this early scene of his pastoral labours, and to the great grief of an affectionate people, who were devotedly attached to his ministry, he resigned his office amongst them, and on June 16, 1805, delivered his last discourse at St. Neots, from Psalm cxvi. 1, 2. The separation, it is believed, was equally painful to himself and the little church that had arisen under his able ministrations; nor can we fully explain such an occurrence, otherwise than by resolving it into the inscrutable wisdom of the divine arrangements, in the development of which

it frequently becomes manifest that the Lord directeth the steps of his servants into extended spheres of usefulness. Such was the issue of Mr. Stevens's withdrawal from his first pastoral charge;—"the fiery, cloudy pillar," passed on before him, and conducted him to a spot, where another portion of the ransomed flock were folded in the *pastures* of the wilderness; while the same unerring and gracious guidance was vouchsafed to another faithful under-shepherd, *Mr. George Murrell*, whose steps were thereby directed to St. Neots, and under whose ministrations the church in that town soon became greatly multiplied, and still continues to be eminently blessed.

It was during his residence and stated ministry in Huntingdonshire, that Mr. Stevens first appeared before the world as an author, by the publication of the first part of his "*Help for the true Disciples of Immanuel*," in which he presented an answer to Mr. Andrew Fuller's celebrated treatise, intituled "*The Gospel worthy of all Acceptation, or the Duty of Sinners to believe in Christ*." This work appeared in 1803, but the second part thereof, was not published until 1814, when his ministry had become established in the metropolis. A second edition of the entire work was issued in the year 1829, with some desirable emendations, an improved arrangement, and a considerable quantity of new matter, while the sentiments inculcated and enforced, remained in substance the same.

The design of the above elaborate and ably written work, being to expose the fallacy and injurious tendency of Mr. Fuller's views of the atonement of Christ, and the duty of unregenerate sinners to believe the gospel with a spiritual and saving faith; Mr. Stevens introduces the subject with a compendious statement of *his own* sentiments, that the reader may be apprised that the fact of man's responsibility is fully conceded and contended for, and "that no plea is set up in behalf of moral evil—no pretence of reckoning the sinner unaccountable to God as his Maker, his Lawgiver, his rightful Governor, and his final Judge."

A variety of leading propositions contained in Mr. Fuller's treatise are noticed, with a view of exhibiting his sentiments on the question at issue, and to demonstrate his opposition to *himself*; which are followed by a diversity of scriptural and conclusive arguments, showing what *is* the duty of unregenerate men, that it *cannot* include any obli-

gation to possess and exercise saving faith, and that the principles and reasonings of Mr. Fuller, are subversive of the doctrines of grace, and delusive to the souls of men.

As the basis of his argument, Mr. Stevens lays down the following proposition, viz., that "whatever is the duty of the unregenerate towards God, is their duty *by the law of their creation state*, and as the children of Adam." The truth of this proposition Mr. Fuller had virtually admitted, wherein he says, "*All duty in some sort belongs to the law. An obligation to believe arises from the law. If our obligations to believe, do not arise from the moral law, they must arise from the gospel as a new law; but the gospel is simply good news, and relates not to precepts or injunctions, but to tidings proclaimed.*" On this principle, Mr. Stevens conducts his argument, and shows that "whatever the law saith, it saith to *all* the unregenerate; and not to *those only* who have opportunity of hearing the gospel:"—that "that *kind of service* which the law requires, would have been required, if Jesus Christ had never been heard of; but if Jesus Christ had never been heard of, *spiritual faith and love* would not have been required, therefore *spiritual faith and love cannot be required of the unregenerate*:"—that the law must suppose, either the *absence* or the *existence* of sin; if the *former*, it cannot enjoin any thing with regard to the removal of sin, and therefore, not faith in Christ; if the *latter*, it inflexibly curses the sinner, and therefore, it cannot enjoin any thing on the accursed that would imply an exemption from its inexorable sentence.

Our author further argues that, as the law makes no mention of mercy, it cannot enjoin the sinner to use means to obtain salvation from its awful sentence; that so to do, would be to resign its essential character, as a rule of strict, impartial, and immutable justice. It is further demonstrated, "that the law cannot legally hold guilty and unregenerate men under its governing authority, as condemned to suffer its awful penalty, and also exhort them, as unregenerate sinners, to use means to escape from under its jurisdiction." That "as the law requires men to love God the same as if they had never apostatized, it cannot enjoin that evangelical love by which faith works, and sinners are saved:"—that "if men are bound to *be*, and to *act* as *innocent* men, they cannot, by the *same law*, be required to *be*, and to *act* as regenerated sinners, saved by grace, and

redeemed by blood." Mr. Fuller had admitted that "God required of men no *natural impossibilities*." Mr. Stevens proves that for men to reproduce the principle lost by the fall, is a natural impossibility, and that it cannot be required by the law of their creation state; and that to reinstate themselves in the divine favour, is neither possible nor commandable. "If," says Mr. S., "no man ever did possess spiritual faith, but as a sovereign gift through the merit of Christ, and by the powerful operation of the Holy Ghost; then no man can prove it possible, in the nature of things, that any one should now possess faith in any other way." "If the *principle* must, in the nature of things, precede the act, then obligation to the act, cannot precede the gift of the principle. If it be subjoined that man lost the principle by the Eden lapse, and that therefore the obligation remains, though the principle be destroyed, it is replied, that *this is founding the whole duty of the dead in sin on disputed premises*. Yet upon this one principle, Mr. Fuller has rested all his arguments." The author of "The Gospel Worthy of all Acceptation," had affirmed his view of man's duty, in the following anomalous and illogical proposition:—"We do not say it is the duty of men to give themselves special grace; all we affirm is, that it is their duty to be that which nothing but special grace can make them. Whatever a person is, or does, in respect to spiritual dispositions and exercises, when he is regenerated, we think it is no more than he ought to have been and done prior to that period, as well as at the time." "What then are sinners to do?" asks Mr. Stevens, "seeing it is admitted not to be their duty to regenerate, or give themselves special grace. As they are unregenerate, and as it is not possible, in the nature of things, that they should act spiritually while they remain so, the question again demands attention, *what are they to do?*" Mr. Fuller says, "*Whatever regenerate men do, carnal men ought to do the same.*" Yet the same author says, "*Carnal men are not bound to love God for his special love and distinguishing grace to them, seeing there is no evidence of his having any such love towards them.*" "The argument, then," says Mr. Stevens, "will stand thus: whatever regenerate men do in respect to spiritual dispositions, unregenerate and carnal men ought to do the same; but regenerate men love God for his special love to them, therefore unregenerate and carnal men ought

to love God for his special love to them!" "This," it is added, "was Mr. Fuller's manner of reasoning, and I never learned that he revoked it, though it is evidently contrarious."

Having, in several following sections of the work, thoroughly examined and refuted Mr. Fuller's arguments, as founded on his own definition of faith, the alleged warrant for sinners to believe in Christ, and the fallacious principle of NO INTEREST BEFORE FAITH; Mr. Stevens proceeds to discuss the most important part of the subject, and that on which the issue of the controversy undoubtedly depends, viz., the *original* principle of love to God, and perfect holiness, as possessed by Adam in his federal headship and relation to his posterity. It was contended by Mr. Fuller, that this was *identical* with the principle of life and holiness, as possessed by the regenerate people of God; that the "*image*" in which the saints are created, "in righteousness and true holiness," is the *same* as that which constituted Adam's perfection in his creation state, and which he lost by transgression. On this assumption, Mr. F. founded his argument for the duty of unregenerate men "to be that which nothing but special grace could make them," inasmuch as their alleged obligation was said to arise from the *original possession of the very principle*, from which the faith, love, and holiness of the regenerate now spring; and that although they have lost their ability to obey, God still retains his authority to command, which he is supposed to do, by enjoining faith in Christ on all who come under the gospel testimony, as the only acceptable expression of love and obedience.

It must be admitted that the subject is extremely intricate, and involves difficulties of no ordinary nature, but Mr. Stevens has encountered those difficulties in a strain of logical argument, and scriptural demonstration, that gives him complete success, and abundantly shows the acuteness of his penetration, the depth of his research, and his thorough acquaintance with the deep things of God. This portion of the work contains the most irrefragable arguments against the theory advocated by Mr. Fuller, the unsoundness of whose principles, and the fallaciousness of whose reasonings, are most conclusively and triumphantly refuted. The distinction between *natural* and *moral* ability and inability to believe in Christ, and to do things

spiritually good, was employed by Mr. F. to sustain his views of saving faith as an universal duty.

Natural ability is defined as consisting of the enjoyment "of rational faculties, bodily powers, and external advantages." By a *moral* ability, is meant a *disposition* to use our natural ability to right purposes. The *possession* of the former only, it was contended by Mr. Fuller, is essential to the existence of obligation. The *absence* of the latter, does not exempt its subject from duty.

This part of the argument is also considered by Mr. Stevens at great length, and the favourite distinction is shown to be of misguiding tendency, and wholly inapplicable to the question at issue. "When God," says Mr. F., "commands us to love him with all our heart, and all our strength, the measure of our strength is set down as *the rule of our obligation*. Does not common sense, and also common honesty, here require the distinction of natural and moral ability?" Mr. Stevens emphatically answers, "No! for the law, in such command, speaks in its native language to the sons of Adam, as it did to their father; it *supposes* the ability which at first was requisite to the constitution of an upright man, *morally able*, as coming out of his Maker's hand, to do the will of his Maker." Mr. Fuller says, that "to love God as the law requires, supposes the *absence* of all evil propensity to rebel against him, and of any approach towards a spirit of contrariety to him." Then, observes Mr. Stevens, "the loved distinction between natural and moral ability is lost! Common sense, and common honesty, must therefore give it up as inappropriate; for in whomsoever we find *the absence of an evil propensity*, we find what is called a '*moral ability*,' and not merely *rational faculties, bodily powers, and external advantages*!" It is further demonstrated, that God has never required *the act of obedience*, without the *radical principle being supposed*; and that in his commands, he leaves men to account for its absence. The subject is further viewed in relation to the decrees of God, and the great work of redemption, and the utter inconsistency of Mr. Fuller's views therewith is clearly pointed out.

The SECOND PART of the work is devoted to a careful consideration of those texts of scripture which were adduced by Mr. Fuller, as supporting his hypothesis, and serves to exhibit the harmony of divine truth, while the

inappropriate use made of those scriptures by Mr. F., is abundantly demonstrated.

This first production of Mr. Stevens's pen, has proved of great advantage to the church of God. Error has indeed taken rapid strides since its publication, and the *tendency* of the sentiments it opposes, is pretty plainly manifest in many of the Baptist churches, by whom *regeneration*, as well as *faith*, is declared to be not merely a duty, but within the compass of a fallen creature's ability, the necessity of the Holy Spirit's agency is *virtually* denied, and his person and official character grievously insulted.

From St. Neots, Mr. Stevens removed to Boston in Lincolnshire, where was a small Baptist church, consisting of about twenty-three members, meeting for the worship of God, in "Walnut Tree Pastures;" from whom he had accepted an invitation, and with whom he commenced his labours on June 23, 1805. His views of divine truth were not very well received by a few of the people, who objected to the discriminating features of his ministry. This partial disagreement, however, was not deemed of sufficient importance to induce him to relinquish a sphere of labour, to which he seemed invited by a concurrence of favourable circumstances. Many were greatly attached to his ministry, and were anxious to secure its permanency, in order to which it was thought desirable that the church should be dissolved, and become *re-formed*, with a view to the establishment of its unity and peace. Whatever circumstances might exist, or may now be considered necessary to have existed, to justify such a procedure, is not a matter of inquiry. Nor are the circumstances which led to the adoption of such a course sufficiently known, to enable us to form a correct opinion on the subject: suffice it to say, after a few preliminary meetings, Mr. Stevens writes, "*It was agreed that the church should be dissolved, and a new formation take place, which was carried into effect on September 22, 1805, when sixteen persons united by mutual choice, who also chose me to be their pastor, which important office I accepted, and in which I continued until June 30, 1811.*"

The period of his residence and pastoral engagements at Boston, though of short duration, and fully occupied in abundant and extended labours, it is believed, was one of the *happiest* that occurred in the whole course of his

ministry. He was favoured to see the church arise and prosper, through the blessing of the Lord most abundantly resting upon his labours. On his ministrations, the doctrine of a full and finished salvation dropped "as the dew, and as the small rain upon the tender herb." The themes on which he delighted to dwell, were those which exhibited the sovereign purposes of Jehovah, as anciently developed in the person of the Son of God—the relations of grace, as founded in his early sonship, and the mediatorial engagements and acts of the first-born, as securing the effectual salvation of the redeemed family, through the operation of a divinely-wrought faith, rendered sure to all the objects of sovereign favour. These truths he proclaimed with an ardour of soul, and discussed with a sweetness of divine savour, that rendered his ministry a centre of attraction and a source of spiritual profit and delight to an increasing number of the saints, who, delivered from the bondage of the generalizing system of doctrine then extending among the churches, entered fully into the spirit of his discourses, appreciated the extraordinary gifts of the preacher, and were favoured with constantly recurring seasons of hallowed enjoyment, in the ministrations and social instructions of their beloved pastor. In the subsequent periods of his life, Mr. Stevens would frequently advert to the *happy* days he passed at Boston. "Walnut Tree Pastures" was a spot ever endeared to him, and in his correspondence with beloved friends, who were there among the people of his charge, and his intimate associates, expressions of the deepest feelings of interest in the cause of Christ at Boston not unfrequently occur. Among the most devoted of his people at this period, was Mrs. Susannah Pearson, authoress of "Essays and Letters addressed to the Church of Christ," who, with Mr. Pearson, had removed from a distant part of the country to Boston, for the purpose of being favoured with his ministry. Possessed of superior mental endowments, and animated with a love of the distinguishing truths of the gospel, Mrs. Pearson was well qualified to appreciate the ministry with which she was now favoured, and from which she doubtless derived advantages, of which many others, through her writings, have been partakers; while the mutual esteem and friendship thereby established was interrupted only by death, to be enjoyed in perfection in a happier state of existence.

During his stay at Boston, the labours of Mr. Stevens were numerous and very extensive. He was emphatically a *home missionary labourer*. Not only was he accustomed to preach the word of God in various places in the county of Lincoln, but for a considerable time he extended his itinerant visits into Huntingdonshire. To St. Ives, and places in that neighbourhood, he regularly travelled once a month, to preach on week-day evenings, and once a quarter on the Lord's-day. So desirous were the people in those parts of his occasional services, that they procured him a horse, to enable him to accomplish his journeys, to which they generously added a stipend of £40 per annum.

In a letter written to his father, dated July 9, 1806, he gives the following graphic description of himself and his labours, while stationed in this part of the Lord's vineyard :

" Since I have been in Lincolnshire, I have had what is here called *the illness*, which is a bad sort of ague, common in this low country, especially to strangers. I cannot say I like this country, but at present it is where my heavenly Father wills me to reside. I travel about a great deal. Every month, I take a journey to Huntingdonshire, and into the borders of Cambridgeshire to preach, which is about 130 miles out, and home again. I am also out every week in Lincolnshire, when not engaged in the above journey. I keep a horse for this business, and have a light cart building, as it is judged easier, both for me and the horse. At least, it will for the horse, as I am more than seventeen stones weight, beside bridle and saddle, and I sometimes ride fifty miles in a day. As I shall have a cart, if my mother could sometime meet me at Houghton, at Mr. Blott's, I could take her down with me to Boston, and bring her back thither again. As to my father, I can hardly persuade myself to expect him; but I think mother may. I have not entered into any permanent engagement at Boston yet, at least, not for more than one year more. How matters in Providence will devolve concerning me, I know not. But I have reason to be humble, and abundantly grateful to the most high God, that he has so graciously blessed me with ministerial abilities, that wherever I go amongst his people, I am most respectfully received, and have ground to believe the hand of the Lord is with me in my work. I am not fully settled in my mind, as to my situation at Boston; it is a large town, but not a great place for dissenters. I sometimes hope the Lord will set me in a more public place yet, but I must wait his pleasure. He has done great things for me, whereof I am glad, both in providence and in grace."

In addition to these abundant labours, we find him again employing his pen in defence of the truth of God, against those whose erroneous views of the moral law of God were considered by him of injurious tendency, and highly

derogatory to the character and authority of Christ, as King in Zion.

The principles and tenets of the celebrated Mr. Huntington, were making considerable advance in some of the churches, and especially in those parts of Lincolnshire where Mr. Stevens was called to labour in the gospel. The legislative authority of Jesus Christ, and the necessity of maintaining the right use of the holy law of God, were deemed of equal importance with the honour of his priestly character, and the glory of distinguishing grace; while the unscriptural sentiments and extravagant assertions of Mr. H. and his followers, induced Mr. Stevens, in the year 1809, to publish his views of the moral law as the only rule of conduct and sanctification to the church of God, in Christ Jesus.

The title of this work, of which a second edition, considerably enlarged, was published in the year 1811, is "*Doctrinal Antinomianism refuted, and the old Law established in a new relation; or, the Preceptive Will of God in Christ Jesus, the only Rule of Obedience to the Saints.*" As might be supposed, the appearance of Mr. Stevens's book, excited considerable interest among the churches, and some attempts were made to invalidate the arguments by which the author had established the gracious authority of the divine law. In the Gospel Magazine, an attack was commenced in a review of Mr. Stevens's publication, which received a brief reply, and the "*Review Reviewed*," presented a further vindication of the author's sentiments, together with a complete exposure of the reviewer's fallacious reasoning.

Among the opponents of Mr. Stevens on the subject of the law of God, was the late Mr. W. Gadsby, of Manchester, who was undoubtedly a godly minister of Jesus Christ. Against the *first* edition of "*Doctrinal Antinomianism refuted*," Mr. Gadsby published a pamphlet, wherein Mr. Stevens's work was designated "*a maze*," and an attempt was made to exhibit and expose the alleged bewildering and self-contradictory notions of its author. In the *second* edition of his work, Mr. Stevens directs the attention of his readers, at considerable length, to Mr. Gadsby's sophistical arguments and truly disingenuous style of reasoning, and in a humorous and powerful manner, retorts upon his opponent, exposes his puerile arguments, and attributes

the *maziness* of Mr. Gadsby's production, to the probable circumstance of its having been written in "a Lancashire mist."

"The pamphlet," observes Mr. Stevens, "demonstrates four things:—that its author felt great aversion to my sentiments on the law: that he was nettled with my statements: that he ardently wished to refute them: but that his ability failed him, and ended in nothing but a maze."

The great practical importance of the subject, however, appears to have induced Mr. Stevens to discuss it with the seriousness it demanded, and with that jealous concern for the honour of Christ, which requires a faithful exposure and reprehension of an error so inimical to practical godliness.

By "doctrinal Antinomians," it is explained in the introduction, "no reference is had to the more common acceptance and application of the term, in which it is wickedly used to reproach the advocates of free and distinguishing grace; but as the appellation literally signifies persons who are *against the law*, it is rightly appropriated in a doctrinal sense, to those who are for excluding the law from all authority and use in the believing world."

The point contended for by Mr. Stevens, is not that the believer is under the law, as a covenant of works, and as a rule of justification; but that he is under *that same law to Christ*, as his King and Lawgiver, in all matters of uprightness in spirit and conduct.

"The debate," says Mr. S., "is not about what *produces* holiness, but concerning the law that *requires* it: not about that influence which *enables* a saint to obey, but about the law which makes certain acts of obedience to be his duty, and the omission of them to be his sin."

In the first two sections of his work, Mr. Stevens lays the foundation, on which he erects the fabric of his argument, wherein he demonstrates that the Lord Jesus Christ is the universal and only lawgiver; that the Deity gave law to men at first, *in* and *by* the adorable person of Immanuel; that as by him all things consist, it must have been *his* prerogative to give law, and to enforce it on his creatures, as the *Head* of nature, and the *Life* of mankind.

The different relations in which the Lawgiver stands, or has stood to men, according to divine revelation, are distinguished and explained. *First*, as the Head over all things, and the Monarch of the world, which relation he sustains to *all mankind*, in which relation the law is shown to have

been given in the heart of Adam, and that, by virtue of federal connection, it has respect to all men under the creation covenant. *Secondly*, as King of the Jews by a *national* covenant, to whom, as his *peculiar people*, he gave his law, and who, in that peculiar relation, were brought under *peculiar obligations*. And *thirdly*, as the ordained Head of all grace, and the exalted King of saints in Zion, in which relation the law is shown to be given in all its import and design to his redeemed people, so that whatever the law saith, as the law of King Jesus in the supernatural relation of grace, it saith to all those who are born from above, and are new creatures in Christ Jesus.

The author, then, in a series of logical arguments, proceeds to establish the truth of the saints' obligation to the preceptive authority of the moral law of God, and to prove that whilst they are delivered from it as the ministration of death and condemnation, it meets them as a *new commandment* in the spiritual relation, and enjoins upon them the obedience of love.

Mr. Stevens also enters into an examination of the diversified and ambiguous representations given of the believer's rule of conduct, by those who deny the spiritual authority of the law. This is variously stated by Mr. Gadsby, as "*the word of God*"—"a law which in its own nature is inseparable from the new covenant relation"—"*the precepts of the gospel*"—"the gospel"—"*the gospel in all its branches*"—"the law of Christ"—"*the will of God in Christ Jesus*"—"the preceptive will of God in Christ Jesus"—"*a new law contained in the covenant of grace, which is the gospel of grace*"—"a law that contains all laws that require holiness."

"This ten-fold description of the rule in question," Mr. Stevens considers to be "ten times more fit for a '*maze*,' than his own, and while it both excludes and includes the moral law," he concludes, that Mr. G. "zealously intended to exclude those *unbearable* commands in the 20th chapter of Exodus." Therefore, in an investigation of the Antinomian rule, it is clearly demonstrated by our author, that it is anomalous and defective, that its construction occasioned Mr. G. no little difficulty and perplexity, and that the inharmonious and contradictory definitions he has given of it were far more fit for a *maze*, than for a standard of admeasurement.

The concluding parts of the work consist of somewhat lengthened replies to the various objections urged against the law, as a rule of conduct to believers, by the advocates of the Antinomian system; and which also include miscellaneous observations on the disingenuous mode of opposition adopted by Mr. Gadsby, and the evasiveness of his arguments and conclusions. Mr. Gadsby, moreover, had complained that Mr. Stevens had not made more copious reference to his writings; on which the latter remarks, that it was chiefly against Mr. Huntington and his followers, he had directed his arguments in the first edition of his work. "In supposing," says Mr. Stevens, "that I levelled my observations at him, Mr. Gadsby was very much misguided. My eye was fixed on the head officer, and my attention to Mr. Gadsby was only a secondary consideration. My ambition was not to engage myself in the herring fishery, but if possible to take a whale!"

On the 10th of June, 1810, Mr. Stevens preached his memorable sermon on the baptismal sufferings of Christ. This instructive discourse was afterwards published under the following title, "*Baptism accomplished, and Jesus straitened no more.*" It was founded on the words of our Lord, recorded in Luke xii. 50,—“But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how am I straitened till it be accomplished.” It was evidently the preacher’s object to present such a view of the overwhelming sufferings of the Son of God as should receive an appropriate illustration from the ordinance of believers’ baptism, and exhibit the real nature and design of that divine institution in the spiritual kingdom of our Lord. Thus the kingly and priestly offices of the Redeemer are unitedly set forth; baptism is preached in a mystery, and a mystery is held forth in baptism. The baptism enjoined on believers, and the baptism accomplished by their suffering Lord, are carefully distinguished, while the reader’s attention is directed to the one through the other, and the humble believer is instructed to hold to the one without excluding the other. One baptism is exhibited as a symbol of another, and the essential and saving baptism of the Redeemer’s sufferings is explained by the figure himself hath chosen; while the anticipated triumphs of the obedient Son of God, in the salvation of his people, are strikingly and beautifully illustrated.

The period was approaching when the ministry of Mr.

Stevens was to terminate at Boston, and his itinerating labours in the country were to be resigned for a more enlarged and important sphere of usefulness. Various circumstances in all probability conspired to bring about this event, some of which may be unknown; but it is gratifying to reflect that his removal from Boston was not, as is too often the case, occasioned by any unhappy circumstances of strife and contention. Pastor and people had dwelt together in the greatest harmony and affection, and at no former period had their unity been more manifest than when the providence of God opened a door for his departure from them. It was felt that Mr. Stevens's pecuniary resources were very inadequate to the comfort of himself and his increasing family, and very disproportionate to his eminent abilities, which were evidently preparing the way for his entrance upon a sphere of labour different from those which he had previously occupied.

Prior to his receiving any intimation of his services being required in London, he appears to have entertained some idea that the metropolis would eventually be the place of his ministrations, and that he should be employed in the work to which he had devoted himself in a part of the Lord's vineyard presenting a wider scope for diligent labour and honourable usefulness. His expectations were very soon realized, for the church at Grafton Street, London, of which he had originally been a member, and from which he had been sent forth to preach the gospel, had been recently bereaved of their pastor, and appear to have almost immediately directed their attention to Mr. Stevens, whom some of them had long known, and with whose occasional ministrations they had been recently favoured. The church consisted of upwards of two hundred members, but they were not unanimous in desiring Mr. Stevens's ministry. Some of the people, who on first hearing him gave him a cordial reception, soon took alarm at the views he entertained of the person of Christ, as the anciently begotten Son of the Father; and suspecting the soundness of his faith in the great doctrine of the Trinity, henceforth erected a somewhat formidable opposition to his settlement. The majority of the church, however, were led to regard the preacher as perfectly orthodox, and it was at length resolved by the church to communicate their wishes to Mr. Stevens, that he should become their pastor, which led to a correspondence,

wherein are expressed the deep exercises of his mind, the painful feelings with which he regarded a separation from his attached friends in Lincolnshire, and his prayerful desires to be guided in his decision by the will of the Lord. The result appears to have been perfectly satisfactory to all parties: Mr. Stevens accepted the invitation of the church at Grafton Street, while the church at Boston, though deeply regretting the removal of their beloved pastor, nevertheless expressed their entire acquiescence in the event, as involving his increased comfort, extended usefulness, and the consequent glory of God, through his future ministrations in a more arduous field of labour. The following are the particulars relating to the above-mentioned interesting and important event.

On the 5th of May, 1811, a special church meeting was held at Grafton Street, when it was proposed that Mr. Stevens should be invited to undertake the pastoral office of the church. Of 177 members present, 136 voted for the motion, and 41 against. The following letter of invitation was then read and adopted:—

“The Church of Christ of the Particular Baptist denomination assembling in Grafton Street, Soho, to their beloved brother, John Stevens:—

“The Great Head of the church having called unto his eternal rest our late beloved and honoured pastor, we bow with adoring submission beneath the afflictive stroke. Being now left in a widowed state, we earnestly implored the blessing of a *settled*, sound, and gifted ministry. The power that attended the word at your first visit among us induced us to invite you to labour among us for three months on probation for the pastoral office; but the general acceptance of your ministry, and the evident display of the divine presence and power that has accompanied your labours, we consider an irrefragable answer to our prayers, and rendering any further probation needless. We therefore most *solemnly, cordially, and explicitly* invite and call you to the immediate exercise of the pastoral charge over us, to duly administer the divine ordinances, and to labour among us in word and doctrine: we hope that this our affectionate invitation will meet with your affectionate acceptance, and that we shall receive you with gratitude, as a valuable gift from our covenant God and Father, in our dear Immanuel. We cheerfully acknowledge it to be our duty to provide for the support and comfort of our pastor and family according to our ability; we therefore promise unto you a salary of two hundred pounds per annum. That we may be enabled to ‘do all things without murmurings and disputings,’ ‘be blameless and harmless, the sons of God without rebuke,’ and that you, ‘holding forth the word of life, may rejoice in the day of Christ, not having run or laboured in vain,’ is the fervent prayer of your brethren in the Lord.”

The preceding letter was signed, on behalf of the church, by the brethren

JESSON, STEVENS, ANGUR, MARRIOTT,	}	<i>Deacons.</i>
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To this communication Mr. Stevens returned the following reply, accepting the invitation of the church:—

"To the Church of Christ assembling in Grafton Street, Soho:—

"Dearly beloved brethren, in the tender bowels of the exalted Lamb,—Your affectionate invitation I have thought upon with great deliberation, and fervent desire to be guided by the unerring hand of our Almighty Father, whose counsels are ever wise, and whose approbation is to me above all things most dear.

"You express a hope that your 'affectionate invitation will meet with my affectionate acceptance.' Deliberation must now terminate in affirmation: your hope is granted. I accept your invitation in the fear of the living God, and hope you will be enabled to receive me as a pastor given from Jehovah, the covenant God of all grace.

"You, my brethren, appear to have been induced to give me an invitation to be your pastor, through the power that attended my ministry among you. May the Lord be glorified by all his benefited children; and may a double portion of the Holy Spirit's gifts and grace attend me, that as I labour your love for the labourer may not only continue, but greatly increase. Thus shall pastor and people dwell together in peace, and the bitter waters of the wilderness be sweetened by the streams of the river of life.

"You cheerfully acknowledge it to be your duty to provide for the support and comfort of your pastor and his family, according to your ability. That this be according to your ability is all I wish—is all I can desire.

"And now, my dear friends, my desire is, that we may be of one heart and one way, and that our united aim may be to promote the Redeemer's glory, in the spread and establishment of his spiritual kingdom. I request an interest in your fervent petitions to the King of grace and glory, that I may be an able minister of the New Testament, and that I may be filled with wisdom, with the Holy Ghost, and with power: in a word, that I may be upright, courageous, prudent, laborious, and useful.

"From your affectionate brother, willing servant, and chosen pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

"P. S. You will of course not write to the church at Boston till I have seen you. I resigned my place among them yesterday, in a flood of tears!! I hope to be with you at the time specified, July the 7th."

June 24th, 1811.

On Lord's-day, July 4th, Mr. Stevens took leave of his beloved friends at Boston, in a farewell discourse, founded on 2 Cor. xiii. 11. This sermon was subsequently published, and is intituled "A Word of Exhortation and Encouragement; being a Farewell Sermon preached at Boston, July 4th, 1811, by J. Stevens." It contains a scriptural illustration and enforcement of the apostolic injunctions severally specified in the text, presented in the author's peculiar style, and expressing for the people of his late charge the warmest sentiments of affection in the truth of God.

"Be not cast down," he affectionately addresses them, "it is not from anything in your faith or conduct, that the ministry is now removed, which to you is a great mercy. I have no complaints to make of your behaviour to me, but, on the contrary, I have the greatest reason to remember you with affection and gratitude to the close of my pilgrimage. You have, my dear brethren, (with tears I confess it,) been kind, just, and generous; nor can your behaviour be erased from my memory by any distance of time or place. I trust the Lord has opened a great and effectual door for my ministry in London, and that I have the pleasing prospect of being abundantly useful in that cause, which you, no less than myself, I am persuaded, would be truly glad to promote. The Lord, who knoweth the hearts of all men, knoweth that I lie not when I say, that I would not indulge a thought of removing from this place, did I know, or even suspect, that by so doing I should his dear name offend. To serve him more extensively, to spread his glory abroad, to promote the knowledge of the truth more abundantly among men, and to make a sober and more public stand against the devices of many,—are certainly (if a man can be thought to know his own intentions) among the leading objects of my mind in thus withdrawing from you, and going to the metropolis of this nation."

Mr. Stevens commenced his labours at Grafton Street, in the pastoral character, on the first sabbath in July, 1811. The following is a copy of the letter containing the dismissal of Mr. and Mrs. Stevens to the church at Grafton Street, which is deeply expressive of the affectionate regard still cherished for him by his friends at Boston, and the entire submission with which they resigned their beloved pastor, at his evident call by divine providence to occupy a sphere of labour, for which his eminent gifts so peculiarly qualified him.

"The Church of Christ of the Particular Baptist denomination, meeting together in Walnut-tree Pastures, Boston, to the Church of Christ meeting in Grafton Street, Soho, London:—

"Dear brethren,—We received yours of the 10th inst., and see it strictly right to comply with your request in reference to our dear

brother Stevens, and his partner, sister Stevens. We hear that you are of the same faith and order with ourselves; therefore as it is your declared desire that our brother and sister should be dismissed from us to you, we readily accede to what you have solicited. We feel sensibly the loss of our dear brother, and would bow to the event, acknowledging the rightful authority of the Great Head of the church to do as he seeth fit. We trust you will find our dear friends such as we have always found them; we are exceedingly glad at the pleasing appearances among you, and pray and hope that our brother Stevens may be made more abundantly and increasingly useful; and sincerely wishing that you may be growingly happy in the choice of our dear friend as a pastor over you, that his ministry may prove abundantly consolatory and confirming to your souls,—we are, dear brethren, on behalf of our church,

“Yours affectionately in our Glorious Head,

“THOS. MAIDENS, }
“SAML. BARNARD, } *Deacons.*

“*Boston, July 14th, 1811.*”

The event of Mr. Stevens's settlement at Grafton Street was immediately followed by the withdrawal of about eighty of the members, a defection in itself considered of a painful nature, but attended with circumstances which occasioned it the less to be regretted. A ministering brother, who well remembers the event, remarks concerning it, “The members of the church under the care of Mr. Burnham, after his decease, would, at their prayer-meetings, intreat the Lord to send them a pastor after his own heart, to go before them and feed them with knowledge and understanding; but when such a man was truly sent in the person of John Stevens, they (many of them) rejected him; but God stood by him, and very soon Grafton Street Meeting was too small for the congregation.” The hand of the Lord was truly with him in the fulfilment of his new pastoral engagements. The chapel was soon filled to excess, and vast numbers would assemble ere the doors were opened, eager to gain admission; whilst hundreds were sometimes compelled to return, unable to effect an entrance. The divine blessing most signally attended his ministrations—the gospel was heard not in word only, but with power, and with the Holy Ghost sent down from heaven. Many were awakened to a deep and lasting concern for the things that accompany salvation, and many others experienced a renewal of their spiritual liberty and joy, under the influence of a ministry that comprehended and enforced the great doctrines of discriminating grace, and that was sustained by a vastly

more than ordinary weight of distinguished ability. The church rapidly increased, and in the month of August, 1812, little more than a year after Mr. Stevens's settlement with them, 102 persons had been added to their fellowship, and there appeared every indication that the influence of his ministry would render a larger place of worship indispensable. Writing to a friend at Boston about this time, Mr. Stevens says,—

"It now appears that my lot is cast in this great city, and every week seems to add to the evidence that I have a great work to do here. In short, it does not seem to be possible that I should return to a country station. After allowing for the novelty of the thing, the attention and spirit of the public are extraordinary, considering my principles. Many profess to have received great benefit, and break out in thanks to the Lord. We are now thinking of procuring a larger place, and have been after several, but it is expected we shall have to build one. I suppose such a place as we want, will cost at least £4000: there seems in the congregation a readiness to act, as soon as any plan shall be proposed to them. If the Lord means me to work on a large scale, he will, I trust, find me a large house to work in. Last night, there was a crowd around the door of the chapel, half an hour before the time, and by the full time or before, every seat and passage became full. I now always have a group of parsons to hear me on the week day. O! curiosity will live deliciously for a while. *Here* the clergyman and the layman consent to sit in the same pew. O! that the Lord may take the advantage of their curiosity, and anoint their eyes afresh."

It may well be supposed, notwithstanding the attractiveness of Mr. Stevens's preaching, and the increase of his popularity in London, that his firm adherence to the great principles of sovereign grace, and the zeal he evinced in contending for "the faith once delivered to the saints," would excite among the advocates of a yea and nay gospel a spirit of active hostility to his ministry. This, indeed, soon became manifest, as the influence of his powerful talents was discovered in the rapid increase of his congregation, the spiritual effects of his ministry, the excitement produced by the somewhat controversial character of his preaching, and the cogent arguments with which he was wont to assail the strong holds of error existing in the churches of the Baptist denomination.

Amidst the controversial labours of Mr. Stevens, we find him compiling a selection of hymns for the use of the church over which he presided. In this work, he exhibited

the same love of consistency and harmony, in the exhibitions of divine truth, that always marked both his ministerial and literary exertions. We find, from the preface to this collection, that its appearance arose from a desire to see the harmony of the doctrines of grace maintained in the services of the sanctuary, in the pew, as well as in the pulpit, that the unity and sovereignty of truth might be shown, in the singing, as well as in the preaching; and a consistency appear between all parts of the worship of God. It was evident to Mr. Stevens, that many of the hymns in common use contained passages which were utterly opposed to the doctrines of sovereign grace; and therefore unfitted for the use of those who loved and revered those doctrines. To remedy this evil, he compiled a selection of hymns, which soon came into use, not only in his own chapel, but in others of the same faith and order: an appendix was added, and it has passed through *eight* editions, in the last of which, the appendix is enlarged by the addition of 91 excellent hymns. This last edition appeared but a short time before the death of the lamented compiler, and is not yet in general use. The selection in its completed form, contains 658 hymns, among which are several original hymns of great merit, and remarkable for their clear and concise enunciations of gospel truths. The well-known and inimitable hymns of Watts are largely inserted, but in all cases where a verse or a line has been thought unsuitable or inconsistent, it has been either altered, or altogether omitted. It is perhaps a matter of regret, that none of Watts's excellent versions of the Psalms of David are added.

The best hymns of Toplady, Newton, Cowper, and Hart, are comprised in this collection, and it is also very copious in appropriate hymns for the Ordinances of Baptism, and the Supper of the Lord. For uniformity of sentiment, and carefulness of arrangement, it is unequalled by any other at present in use in the churches, and requires only to be known to be preferred.

He had ventured to write against Mr. Fuller; and in his treatise on the subject of saving faith, had proved himself one of Mr. F.'s most powerful antagonists, and had exposed the fallaciousness of the arguments by which that eminent writer had sought to establish the universal duty of men to believe the gospel unto salvation. The subject was justly

deemed by Mr. Stevens of great importance, as involving no less the honour of the Redeemer's character than the doctrinal purity of the churches of Christ. It entered very much into his ministry; and the prevailing influence of the sentiments he opposed doubtless imparted a more controversial character to his discourses, and induced him to give a greater prominence to the disputed points than would otherwise have been assigned them.

The antagonistic position, however, thus assumed and sustained by the influence of his extraordinary talents, and an uncompromising fidelity to the cause of truth, was sufficient to occasion no little opposition both towards himself and his ministry, while it induced among the ministers of the Baptist churches in the metropolis, generally, a shyness and a cool indifference that strongly indicated the absence of true cordiality, and precluded that free and familiar intercourse which it is desirable for brethren to cultivate. Most of the ministers in London evinced an unwillingness to recognize Mr. Stevens, which doubtless arose from the decided stand he had made against the prevailing influence of those sentiments considered by himself so inimical to the gospel of free grace. It seems, however, but justice to say, that the importance he attached to an *uniform* and a *consistent* adherence to the great truths of the gospel, was such as that he felt disinclined altogether to take any part in the advocacy of those religious institutions, whose object was to extend the gospel of Christ and promote our denominational interests, but which he clearly perceived were fostering and disseminating the very errors which he was labouring, from the pulpit and the press, to counteract and abolish. In consequence of which he was undoubtedly regarded by many as being altogether opposed to missionary operations, which, though a perfectly mistaken conclusion, was in all probability partly the cause of that absence of cordial feeling which was apparent among the ministers of the denomination from the commencement of his ministry in the metropolis.

To another cause, also, may be attributed the estrangement which evidently existed between Mr. Stevens and the generality of the London ministers and churches. On the glorious doctrine of the person and mediatorial character of the Son of God, he entertained such views as were not only very unpopular, but were also considered by many of

dangerous tendency, and in their consequences highly derogatory to the personal glory of the Redeemer. The ancient and *actual* existence of the humanity of Christ, in union with his divine nature, as the first production of divine wisdom and power, was a sentiment tenaciously maintained by Mr. Stevens, and ably vindicated in his ministry and writings, as an important truth of divine revelation. Although it was no novel doctrine, nor the belief of it peculiar to himself, yet Mr. Stevens had become its distinguished advocate, and from a conviction of its essential importance in a scriptural exhibition of the doctrines of the Trinity and the fundamental truths of eternal salvation, it became interwoven throughout his ministry; and by the prominence it held among the glorious truths which he fearlessly and ably defended, it was the occasion of no little stir among many, who, doubtless with equal sincerity, were apprehensive of the injurious tendency of such views; while others evinced a *rancorous* feeling that evidently betrayed their forwardness to condemn, as heretical, that which they perhaps *considerately* declined to prove to be unscriptural.

It was probably the excitement produced among the opponents of the doctrine of the pre-existence of Christ's human soul, that led him to publish his views on this subject to the world. In the year 1812 was issued a *poetical* exposition of the sentiment, with copious scriptural references in support thereof. Many persons took a lively interest in this publication, who have long since entered their rest; and an expressed desire "to promote the knowledge of the Christ of our God, and thereby to endear him to his inquiring and believing disciples," induced the author, a short time before his death, to issue a *second* edition of the work, to which is subjoined a notice of several objections to the sentiment, together with "A Consideration of the uses of the doctrine of the Saviour's Pre-existence." Some there were, however, at the period of Mr. Stevens's first settlement in London, who professed to receive the doctrine of our Lord's early existence, but yet denied his true and essential Godhead. This was regarded by many persons as the legitimate consequence of the sentiment advocated by the pastor of Grafton Street, relative to the primeval glory of the great Head and Redeemer of the church. To obviate, therefore, such groundless misconceptions, to promote the knowledge of our Lord's antiquity as the only begotten

of the Father, and to convince the opposers of his essential divinity of their awful error, he wrote and published in the year 1813, his work intituled "A SCRIPTURAL DISPLAY OF THE TRIUNE GOD, AND THE EARLY EXISTENCE OF JESUS' HUMAN SOUL." The author says in his preface,—

"I have thought it needful to make the following open avowal of my sentiments, for the satisfaction of my friends, who have long desired me to do so ; and also for the purpose of meeting the accusations of others, who are apt, on hearing what they do not understand, to invent the worst of constructions, and to increase their guilt before God abundantly by going about uttering falsehood. . . . He that considers the work as unworthy of his serious investigation, will have no ground either to blame or commend what is done. It is certainly reasonable that he who is too obstinate to read should be esteemed too ignorant to judge."

This interesting and instructive work is appropriately introduced by remarks "*On the Divine Authority of the Scriptures,*" which are followed by "*explanatory observations on certain words and phrases.*" In this section the author presents his views of the relative names by which the Divine Trinity is known, viz., FATHER, SON, and SPIRIT, and which names he considers were "assumed by the eternal THREE IN DEITY, for the purpose of revealing the true God to man, in a way beyond what was designed by the Eden covenant ; that those names were chosen with a view to the *Sonship* of the Lord Jesus, and are founded on his complex person and fulness ; that Sonship respects the human nature of our blessed Lord, and *not the generation of his divine person* ; that "that which was begotten and brought forth before Jehovah's works of old, and was with the Father, was *the human soul of Christ* ;" that "this exalted soul of our adorable Lord was brought into the being it now has *by Jehovah*, under a personal distinction ; and therefore that divine person who had assumed the relative name, Father, is always represented as having begotten and brought forth, acquired and possessed, a Son ; that the first begotten of God the Father was brought forth into being in a personal union with *that* Holy One, who had graciously assumed the personal and relative name, Son, and that this complex person is therefore called the Son OF GOD the Father, for in the begotten nature he is OF the Father."

The two following sections are devoted to a critical

investigation of the incommunicable name, JEHOVAH, and the Hebrew word, ALEIM, which is translated GOD; "shewing the latter to be of plural signification, and that it is used to denote the *plurality* of the eternal deity." Herein it was the author's design to prove the real and proper divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the arguments to substantiate which, are considerably amplified, and extended over upwards of 70 pages of the work.

Mr. Stevens then enters on the distinct consideration of the Sonship and Pre-existence of Christ, in the course of which he adduces a great variety of scriptures to establish the doctrine he undertakes to defend. Of the various descriptive titles applied to the Son of God, that by which the beloved disciple set forth the ancient glory of his person and character, in the commencement of his gospel narrative is first expatiated on at considerable length. The WORD which was "*in the beginning with God,*" to whom divine honours are ascribed, and who, as the eternal life of his people, became manifested in the flesh, is shewn to be the ancient, complex person of the Lord Christ. The descriptive language used by the apostle, it is demonstrated, cannot apply either to a divine person abstractly considered, nor to a person *merely* human. While the proper divinity of this glorious person is plainly asserted, it is contended that the same *Word*, which "*was God,*" was also in the beginning, as a complex agent, "*with God,*" the anciently begotten of the Father; and in the fulness of time was manifested, heard, seen, looked upon, and handled. This and similar other language of holy writ, which has been generally adduced to establish the exclusive doctrine of our Lord's divinity, is demonstrated to be insufficient for the purpose; and that an attempted vindication of the Deity of the Son of God,—founded on such language as affirms him to have been "*in the beginning with God,*" the only begotten of the Father, &c. &c.,—can never prove successful against the opposers of the essential Godhead of the Saviour. To consider the WORD as a complex agent, human and divine, it is contended, is the only plain way of understanding the language of the Apostle, so that while the different natures in his person are distinguished, the personal union of both may be maintained.

"Consider the Word," says Mr. S., "as a personal subsistence in the Godhead, and he is truly God, without beginning; also view the

Word as begotten, and as the first-born of every creature, and he was, and still is, (as far as respects the inferior nature) with God, *in* and *from* the beginning." Thus it is observed, "We have first, the Word *in* God, without beginning; secondly, the Word *with* God, in the beginning; and thirdly, the Word *from* God after the beginning, or in the fulness of time."

An inquiry is further instituted into the signification of the title itself, as applied to our Lord Jesus Christ. His being called the Word, it is shown, is of itself no expression of his divinity, though the person so named is expressly called "*God over all, and blessed for ever.*" But he is so called to denote that he is the express image and representation of the divine mind to angels and men,—that he is the original and substantial Word, and that the inspired writings, as the word of God, obtain their name from him by the Holy Ghost, as the Spirit of Christ.

"But to suppose," observes Mr. Stevens, "that all the Old Testament was written, and that the prophets were inspired by the *Spirit of Christ*, and that this word of the Lord God was many centuries on the earth, as a *transcript*, before the *original* was in being as the Word *with* God, must be a most singular supposition for a rational mind to entertain. Yet this must have been the case if our Lord had no other existence than that of abstract divinity; and how could he be the head of prophetic, as he was of apostolic light, if all the prophets were dead and gone long before he had an existence in that nature, of the fulness of which the apostles received grace for grace?"

The argument to establish the early existence of our Lord's manhood, is pursued in a copious elucidation of Prov. viii. 22—31, wherein the ancient Son of God, under the character of Wisdom, is evidently speaking of his begotten humanity. The language, it is averred, is in no way becoming a divine person, abstractedly considered, but that it plainly reveals the *real existence* of our Lord's *begotten* nature, in that personal union it is allowed *now* to have. That the whole passage refers to Christ is clearly demonstrated. So that when he says, "*The Lord possessed me; I was brought forth; I was set up from everlasting; I was with him as one rejoicing always before him; I was daily his delight,*" &c.,—it is contended that such language is far too low to express the divinity or eternal existence of Christ, and that it can admit of no possible interpretation but that which is consistent with the positive declaration that he is "the beginning of the creation of God, the first-

born of every creature." Our author then proceeds to the apostolic writings, whence he establishes the doctrine for which he contends, by the most conclusive arguments, the perusal of which, if it do not carry conviction to the doubtful mind, surely ought to silence all *such* objectors to the antiquity of our Lord's humanity as are accustomed to scornfully treat it as an hypothesis utterly unsupported by divine testimony.

That important passage in Col. i. 14—18, is taken by Mr. Stevens as the ground of his argument, from which he takes occasion principally to enforce the *true sense* of the apostle's declaration,—that the Son of God, in whom we have redemption, is "*the first-born of every creature.*" Various writers, it is remarked, wishing to predicate the above language of Christ, as a divine person, have given it different renderings, such as—" *The first-born before all the creation,*"—" *The first cause of the whole creation,*"—" *The bringer forth of the whole creation,*" &c. In opposition to these senses, Mr. Stevens adduces various scripture testimonies, to prove that the *original* word rendered *first-born*, signifies something *first brought forth*, and that in its application to the Son of God it retains its natural and proper sense of primogeniture, and that therefore, as it respects his human spirit, he is the *first-born*, the *first-begotten*; while in his divine personality, he is unoriginate and self-existent. By some it is contended, that Christ is "the first-born of every creature," in God's eternal decree: such an interpretation of the language, however, is shewn to contain "the strongest affirmation in behalf of the pre-existence that any one could well advance; for whatever he was in God's eternal decree, *that* he was sure to be in the execution of that sovereign decree, seeing "*he worketh all things after the counsel of his own will.*"

On the primeval glory of Christ, before he took flesh and dwelt on earth, the author dwells at considerable length; and brings before the view of the reader those passages which are considered to present demonstrative proof of the antiquity of Jesus. The argument is viewed in connection with our Lord's memorable prayer, recorded in the 17th of John, wherein he claims a re-possession of the glory which he had with the Father before the world was; that glory which the Father had given him, and which he claimed for his redeemed church, as being with himself loved of the

Father before the foundation of the world. The glory here prayed for is shewn to be not the *essential* glory of his divine person, abstractly considered, for this could not be relinquished or laid aside, nor could it come under the idea of a *gift*, or be promised in covenant, as the reward of work done by the Lord Jesus as the Surety of his people; but it was evidently the glory of his mediatorial character, or the glory of his human nature, which, in its pre-existent state, was honoured and glorified in the hypostatic union. Therefore what he then prayed for as the reward of his mediatorial work he now enjoys, and that glory is what his disciples are to *see*, when they come to be with him in his kingdom above. "*We shall see him as he is, for we shall be like him.*" "But," observes Mr. Stevens, "had he not possessed that glory-likeness before any of his brethren, he would rather have been made like them; thus, how could the Father predestinate his adopted children to be conformed to the likeness of his *first-begotten*?"

In harmony with the above view of the Redeemer's ancient glory, the Apostle's language is considered in 2 Cor. viii. 9. It is affirmed to be impossible that Christ as a divine person merely should divest himself of riches, and *become poor*. For of him who is infinitely self-sufficient, eternally rich in perfections and glories, and in the indefeasible possession of all things, such language cannot be correctly predicated, while the pre-existent glories of his manhood are excluded. It is therefore demonstrated that he who was rich was the Lord, the anointed Saviour, and that this very title supposes the existence of the manhood of our Lord, which became emptied of its fulness of riches and glory, in which he descended from heaven; and in which he is now ascended "up where he was before."

The argument is also viewed in relation to the visible appearances of the Son of God to the ancients before his incarnation, and to his coming in the flesh; from which is adduced much corroborative testimony concerning the truth of the doctrine pleaded for. Several objections to the author's views of this interesting subject, are then noticed and answered, wherein the fallacies supposed to be connected with the doctrine of our Lord's pre-existing humanity, are obviated, and the whole work is concluded with some important remarks on the official work of the Holy Spirit, and the revelation of the eternal Trinity, as

founded in the federal transactions between the Father and the Son ; of which the Holy Spirit is a witness to believers.

Respecting the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence, Mr. Stevens has the following judicious remarks :

" It has happened, with regard to the doctrine of pre-existence, as in some other points, that certain individuals, after having been brought to see something of its advantages have, through the pleasure they have found in it and its tendencies, been carried away to some extravagant lengths of imagination and assertion, before they have properly seen into their very great want of judgment and discretion. And while such zealous advocates for the sentiment, display their unguided zeal, together with their unarranged ideas on the subject they so eagerly wish to propagate, it of course falls out that their principal success is found among those who receive sentiments, as young rooks receive food from their dams ; while some, who truly understand and believe the doctrine itself, are grieved to see how truth is mutilated, in what is called preaching and defending it ; and others, who have without reason, cultivated a disposition hostile to the principle, go away disgusted, at what they call the pre-existent scheme, when in truth, perhaps, it is rather the disorderly and defective manner in which it was held forth, than the doctrine itself, that increased their disgust, and confirmed their prejudices : " p. 208.

This work was highly appreciated by Mr. Stevens's people, and many others in different parts of the country, who had sat under his instructive ministry, and through his instrumentality had become established in the truths of the gospel ; while not a few, who had been opposed to the author's views of the person of Immanuel, were led to discover, by the perusal of his work, that the antiquity of " the Man Christ Jesus " was neither difficult to understand nor dangerous to believe ; but that it exhibited him in an honourable character, unequivocally expressed and satisfactorily attested in those inspired records, which declare him to have been " before all things," " the beginning of the creation of God, the first-born of every creature."

While his pen was thus employed in exhibiting his Lord's glorious person and character, his ministry was attended with great success ; the church under his care was continually increasing in numbers ; and the congregations were so large, that the necessity for a more commodious chapel became inevitable. Many of the followers of the late Mr. Huntington were greatly attracted by his ministry, and flocked to hear him. Providence Chapel, Gray's Inn Lane, was about this time in the course of erection, for the cele-

brated "coal-heaver," which was the occasion of the Huntingtonians repairing in great numbers to Grafton Street. But Mr. Stevens was soon discovered to be too arminianized for them. His views of the obligatory nature of the irrevocable law of God soon induced them to quit. Observing their frequent attendance, as he afterwards humorously remarked, he delivered one or two pointed discourses on that unwelcome subject, which occasioned their hasty departure, not, however, without fulminating their anathemas against the preacher and his ministry.

The chapel at Grafton Street being by far too inconvenient for the increasing congregation, Mr. Stevens and his friends were compelled to seek for another place of worship, which was at length obtained and occupied, under somewhat disadvantageous circumstances. A very spacious chapel in York Street, St. James's, was engaged by the church; in which Mr. Stevens preached his first sermon, October 10, 1813.

This place had formerly belonged to the Spanish ambassador, and was occupied, it is presumed, by the Spanish Roman Catholics. Subsequently, the Swedenborgians possessed it, and for a time used it as a place of worship. Mr. Stevens and his friends engaged it an annual rent of £200; in addition to which, there were other expenses on the chapel, amounting altogether to £1 per day, independent of the minister's salary. But results fully justified this formidable undertaking. On the day of the opening of the place, it was crowded as much as Grafton Street Chapel had been, and the same inconveniences, in respect of heat and want of room, seemed to attend them in a vastly more commodious habitation than that they had left. The interest excited by the ministry was intense, and the success attending Mr. Stevens's labours became increasingly extensive and encouraging. Here he laboured for several years with indefatigable industry and zeal in his great Master's cause; his powerful mind still expanding in the great themes of his ministry, and the people being enriched under the ministrations of the Holy Ghost, from the heavenly treasury of knowledge and grace, through his approved and valued instrumentality.

In the year 1815, Mr. Stevens delivered his discourse on "The Pleasure of God in the Salvation of his People," which, by the request of his friends, was soon afterwards

published, a second edition being issued in 1819. The text is taken from Psalm cxv. 3: "He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased." The sermon contains a luminous defence of the divine sovereignty in the eternal election, certain redemption, and effectual conversion of the people of Jehovah's love. The design of the preacher, was chiefly, to exhibit the *manner* of the Lord's dealing with his chosen people, from the period of their spiritual birth to their arrival in glory: therefore those manifestations of divine sovereignty which attend the saints through the vicissitudes of earthly pilgrimage, form the principal contents of this powerful and sweetly experimental discourse. Having shown that God dealeth with his people in some respects *all alike*, as his adopted children, loved with the same eternal love in Christ their chosen Head and Saviour; he proceeds to point out the different ways and methods of his grace towards them, according to his sovereign pleasure, which are illustrated by the *different ages* in which they are called; the *manner of his love* in bringing them to enjoy his salvation; the *different employments* assigned them in his spiritual kingdom; the *degrees of growth in grace* which they attain; the *circumstantial differences* that appear in the earthly lot of the righteous; and the *manner of their departure* from this world by death. In all this variety of dealing with his redeemed people, the Lord is seen to have accomplished *his own will*, and to have "*done whatsoever he hath pleased*." The sermon is richly fraught with an experimental savour of that salvation, whose glorious doctrines and sanctifying influences pervaded the ministry of the man of God, who, though dead, yet speaketh in the consolatory sentiments of this admirable discourse, to the afflicted and doubting sons and daughters of Zion.

In the month of May, 1816, Mr. Stevens published a small work, entitled "THOUGHTS ON SANCTIFICATION AND STRICT COMMUNION;" consisting of extracts from several discourses delivered at York Street, in the early part of the same year. The subject being intimately connected with the spiritual authority and use of the law of Christ as King in Zion, and moreover, involving the question concerning *imputed sanctification*, and the *progressive holiness* of the regenerate people of God; these topics are considered in relation to the important branch of gospel doctrine discussed in this ably written treatise. A comprehensive view is

taken of the subject, and the necessary distinctions to be observed, in order to a scriptural and harmonized view thereof, are pointed out and maintained with the author's usual ability.

Having offered a few illustrative remarks on the radical import of the verb *to sanctify*, the grace of sanctification is traced to its root and source, in the person and office of Immanuel. In his complex person and glorious headship, *He* is shown to be the original object of sanctifying grace, being *set apart* to the high office of a Saviour, and *anointed* with a fulness of the Holy Spirit's gifts and graces, as the head or fountain of all communicable fulness to the church, by the will of God the Father, before time began; and that therefore, the *nature* of the redeemed was first *efficiently* sanctified in his person, who was the first-born among many brethren. The sanctification of the church *in* Christ, by virtue of federal union, is copiously illustrated, and the doctrine of *imputed* sanctification is ably vindicated and clearly established. Here, however, the author distinguishes that sanctification which is *relative and representative*, from that which is *influential and practical*, and shows that it is only in the *former* sense that the idea of *imputed* sanctification can have any place. Thus it is clearly demonstrated, that Christ *is* our sanctification towards and before God, by representing us in himself, *before* he is our sanctification *to* us and *in* us, through the indwelling and operation of his Holy Spirit: that we are as truly sanctified by relation to him as our representative, as we were truly defiled by our union to Adam, who represented his seed in the Eden state. Therefore, if this relative or representative sanctity be admitted, it is contended that *imputed* sanctification is a doctrine according to the scriptures. "To be interested in Christ," says Mr. Stevens, "must mean that we are interested in his holiness; but to be interested in it, is as much as its being *imputed* to us. For how can I be interested in his holiness, without that holiness being mine? And how can it be mine, without the God of all grace having willed it to me? and how could he will it to me, and not reckon it mine? but could he from of old reckon it mine, and yet not impute it to my person?" "Again," says our author, "when I speak of *imputed sanctification*, I certainly do not use the word sanctification in a *practical* sense, or as denoting a course

of holy conduct; but in a restricted sense, for *the holy principle or root of all holy actions*; which principle is as truly from Christ, as corruption is from Adam; and thus when a poor sinner is made a partaker of this heavenly root by the Spirit of Christ, he is truly sanctified in a *passive* sense, and the holiness thus possessed was provided for him in Christ, as his holy head and representative, and was *given* to him in the covenant of grace, and so of course was *imputed* to him, or placed to his account, and considered his."

The inward root, or vital principle of sanctification in the saints, then comes under consideration, and is described as an *internal production* of the Holy Spirit, itself called, "*spirit*"—" *life*"—" *seed*"—" *the root of the matter*," &c.; which as a principle of holiness is complete at once, wrought instantaneously, and liable to no corruption, improvement, or mutation; by which also God ever dwells in his spiritual temple, sways the heart to heavenly pursuits, and counteracts the works of the flesh.

Practical sanctification is then shown to consist of the operations of the vital principle, under the actuating power of divine grace, and the holy energy of the Spirit of Christ, put forth in the doctrine of his blood and righteousness, through the exercise of faith and love, and constraining the heart to a willing obedience to the commands of Christ. The fallacy of excluding the law, as a rule of sanctification to the saints, is exposed, and the true essence of sanctification is shown to consist in the obedience of love, and a practical separation of the faithful from the evils of the world and the works of the flesh, unto holiness of heart and life, by faith in Christ Jesus.

In connection with the subject, Mr. S. has introduced several weighty and unanswerable arguments, against the unwarrantable practice of "*open communion*," as advocated by the late Mr. Hall, and admitted into many of the Baptist churches. His reasons for rejecting this innovation upon the law of Christ, are all founded upon its irrepealable character, and the beguiling nature of that *false charity*, which is subversive of the plainest authoritative commands of Christ, and destructive of the ordained order and purity of church fellowship.

Mr. Stevens appears to have enjoyed a great portion of happiness during the former part of his ministry at York

Street. Such was the prosperity evidently attending his labours, the power that accompanied the word, and the continual accessions made to the church, that his hands were greatly strengthened, and the work of the Lord was truly his delight.

The auspicious circumstances, however, by which he was now surrounded, did not ensure him uninterrupted happiness in his work, nor secure a continuance of that harmony and peace, which had hitherto prevailed among his people. The following extract from a letter, addressed to one of his esteemed friends at Boston, expresses the feelings of his mind, under the experience of circumstantial annoyances, at this period. It was written in the year 1816. He observes,—

“We are as usual here; we had expected to be turned out of our meeting-house, but have now engaged it for another period. I find thorns, as well as roses still, and yet I am not so patient with my pricked fingers, as would become me. A *large church* is like a large family; if one is well, another is sick, and if one be a comfort, another is a vexation. And my heart is so fraught with sin and weakness, that when the folly of others comes in contact, the meeting is not a little disturbing. In short, the longer I live, the further evidence I gain that I am a small saint in a great form.”

During the progress of events at York Street, Mr. Stevens was called to endure a heavy domestic trial, in the removal by death, of his beloved wife, after a protracted illness, and the repeated disappointment of hopes entertained of her ultimate recovery. A gradual consumption terminated her earthly existence, October 7, 1818, leaving her afflicted husband and seven children, to lament their loss. Mrs. Stevens was a superior woman, in every sense of the word, and had very much contributed, by the agreeable qualities of her mind, and the stability of her religious character, to the comfort and happiness of her beloved companion, in the prosecution of his ministerial work. Her religious profession was sustained by the influence of a lively faith; and during her long affliction, she was enabled through grace, to bear a solid and satisfactory testimony to the faithfulness and love of Him whom she had believed, and whom, in her last hours, she frequently invoked, in the ardent language of the exiled disciple—“Come, Lord Jesus, come quickly.” Her remains were interred at Blandford Street Chapel, on Monday, October 12; and in pursuance of *her own particular request*, Mr. Stevens himself undertook the

painful task of improving her death, in a sermon delivered the Lord's day, from Isaiah xxxiii. 24: "And the inhabitant shall not say, I am sick: the people that dwell there, shall be forgiven their iniquity."

The following letter was written by Mrs. Stevens, as she was approaching her end; the insertion of which, it is hoped, may be gratifying to some, and not uninteresting to any who may peruse these memoirs.

"My dear Friend,—As you have ever expressed a kind solicitude respecting my welfare, I conceived a knowledge of my present state of health, would not be unwelcome. I am much better (through infinite mercy) than I was when you last saw me. I have not had a return of the pain in my side, but my cough is much the same. My friends seem so desirous of my trying a change of air again, as the last resource, I apprehend; I have consented, though reluctantly, once more to go into the country, and I purpose setting off to-day, and bidding my family once more adieu. Thus, you see, my dear friend, I am called again to visit those relations, who have shown me so much kindness; and they have promised again to do every thing in their power to render me comfortable, during my stay with them.

"Although I view these temporal favours as great mercies indeed, yet when I by faith, can regard them as bestowed on me, as covenant blessings, coming from my Almighty Father and reconciled Friend, in Christ Jesus,—O then! my soul is dissolved in gratitude and love. You, my dear friend, I trust, understand me, having known by sweet experience what those divine sensations are. I have found in the hours of affliction and pain, nothing but a real possession of religion, and an application of the precious promises in the hand of the Holy Comforter, can sustain the mind in the prospect of eternity, when every terrestrial object vanishes from the sight. May you, and may I, my friend, when called to experience that solemn change, be blest with the presence of our redeeming God! Then shall we be enabled to say with the exulting Psalmist, 'Though I walk through the dark valley, yet shall I fear no evil, for thou art with me,' &c. I have scribbled these few lines in great haste, but you will (I dare say) excuse every defect. I hope you will be enabled to pray that the Lord will bless the means (in subordination to his unerring will) to the restoration of the health of

Your sincere Friend and Sister,
In our glorious Covenant Head,
MARY STEVENS."

Buckingham Place, Thursday Morning.

Under the loss thus sustained by the decease of one who had for many years been the friend of his bosom, and the sharer of his joys and sorrows, Mr. Stevens was greatly supported by the influence of those truths, which he was now required to exemplify in the walks of domestic solitude, as well as exhibit in those lofty flights of ministerial

eloquence, for which he was so eminently remarkable. But he *deeply* felt his bereaved condition. The event had deprived him of his domestic stay, dried up the source of most endearing sympathies, and assigned him the undivided care of a numerous family; while it did not fail to evolve those finer sensibilities of mind, which his characteristic reservedness might sometimes conceal; but which nothing could repress or restrain, when "busy, meddling memory" depicted the image of departed worth, and recalled to view the sacred scenes of the domestic sanctuary, where

"Engaging kindness, with affection joined,
Bespoke th' indulgent greatness of his mind."

To his most intimate friends, he would frequently give expression to the feelings of his heart, under this severely felt trial. The following extracts from his correspondence with his esteemed friends, Mr. Thomas Bonfield and Mrs. S. Pearson, in allusion to his bereavement, sufficiently indicate both the sufferings and the solace of his mind. To Mr. Bonfield, he writes as follows:—

"My dear Brother,—I received yours, and thank you for every expression of kindness and regard. I shall omit any enlargement on my late bereavement, and my continued loss and sorrow; nor can I express fully, what the visitation has been to my feelings. The Lord has done as it has pleased him; in his hands I rest, and hope for his paternal care and guidance through the remainder of my days. I conclude that if I could see with his ability, I should admire his wisdom and mercy, in the very conduct which has deprived me of my chief earthly treasure: but why do I say *mine*? the time had expired for which it was lent—it was mine no longer. I often have thanked him for the loan since the repayment, and know that his love is as great, as in the day when I gladly received his favour. I have acquired a little experience by the trial, and it will be hard for me to hear of any upright man of susceptible feelings, in a similar circumstance, without shedding a tear of sympathy for his agony of grief. It must be felt, to be conceived of clearly; but in the worst, I found my principles, through the blessed Spirit, a reality of support. God be praised for gospel truth and spiritual life, to enjoy confidence in them."

The following was addressed to Mrs. Pearson:—

"My dear Friend,—I thank you for every kind remembrance of me, and can say that I do not forget you, though we seem so circumstanced as to obtain but little intercourse. I have scarcely written to any one of late: I have found my mind so overwhelmed with grief, on making the attempt, that I have declined the task for my own sake; for my feelings are remarkably susceptible, which subjects me, through reflection, which is unavoidable in a friendly correspondence, to that

burst of anguish, which I scarcely think any one can understand correctly, but by being in like circumstances, with like natural frailties. But I must aim to turn to other subjects: the Lord has ever been a good, a just, and a faithful Friend to me: let his holy name be magnified in the waters and in the fires; in the valleys, and on the mountains, always, and for ever."

It was in the year 1818, that Mr. Stevens was induced to resume his pen, in defence of the pre-existent glory of our Lord's humanity, in a friendly correspondence with the venerable and excellent Dr. Hawker, who, in a course of published Lectures, on the Person, Godhead, and Ministry, of the Holy Ghost, had attacked the sentiments of Christ's pre-existence with a degree of severity, which Mr. Stevens was unwilling to let pass, without administering to the Doctor an affectionate reproof for his uncharitableness; and presenting him with a scriptural defence of the doctrine he had so unscrupulously condemned. The good Doctor had affirmed the doctrine of the pre-existence of the human soul of Christ, prior to his incarnation, to be "*equally awful* to any thing that can be supposed—a *delusion of the most dreadful kind*—and *wholly unfounded* in the word of God; yea, wholly unsupported by all revelation." Also, "that this chimera of the brain is directly opposed to all truth, and is a *daring heresy*—that it is a Babel building, and thrown down at a blow by Paul, in his Epistle to *the church at Galatia*—that the sentiment is *absurd and preposterous*—that the doctrine of pre-existence robs Christ of the *merits of his incarnation, and the souls of his people of their happiness*."

These, and many other absurdly vehement expressions of hostility to the doctrine in question, the excellent Doctor allowed himself to intersperse with what he doubtless considered convincing proofs of the *heretical* character of the sentiment he so severely censured. It is due, however, to the memory of Dr. Hawker to observe, that he subsequently assured Mr. Stevens, whom he treated with every mark of fraternal esteem, that in what he was led to write against the doctrine of the pre-existence, his "*remarks were wholly directed against the Sabellian heresy, and that at the time his lectures were published, he had never heard of any one who espoused the doctrine, but the followers of Sabellius the Lybian*." To repel, however, the Doctor's unproved assertions and unjustifiable reflections, Mr.

Stevens addressed to him a friendly epistle, intituled, "THE ANTIQUITY OF JESUS; OR, HIS PRE-EXISTENCE DEFENDED;" which he commences by a statement of those doctrines, in which he believes it to be his happiness to *agree* with the venerable vicar of Charles, and then proceeds to a summary of particulars, on which, it is affirmed, they *differ*; among which the antiquity of the man Christ Jesus, is presented as the subject of the present controversy; the unwarrantable assertions of the Doctor thereon, are subjected to an examination; and his arguments against the doctrine, are replied to at considerable length. It would seem that the worthy Doctor, not only was ignorant of any having espoused the doctrine of pre-existence, except the Sabellians; but that he as little expected to meet with so able a defender of the offensive tenet among those, whose orthodoxy was unquestionable, and whose arguments appear to have had some influence in softening his asperity against it. Justly are the character, talents, and godly sincerity of the venerable Dr. Hawker regarded; and none more cheerfully accorded to him every sentiment of cordial esteem than Mr. Stevens, whose letter, however, presents such a scriptural vindication of the doctrine objected to, as at once evinced the weakness of the Doctor's arguments, and the futility of his assertions. To Mr. Stevens's letter, Doctor Hawker published a reply, couched in the most respectful terms, apologizing for any seeming harshness with which his opinions had been expressed, declaring his adherence to the views contained in his Lectures on the Person of Christ, and presenting additional reasons for rejecting the doctrine he had opposed. In a *second* letter, addressed to the Rev. Doctor, Mr. S. resumes the subject, and in the same fraternal spirit exposes the Doctor's inconsistencies, vindicates the doctrine from the charges of his opponent, and refutes the argument urged against it, as an alleged unscriptural hypothesis. It is not a little singular that, notwithstanding Mr. Stevens constantly based his arguments on the authority of divine revelation, the Doctor continued to exclaim against the doctrine in question, on the ground of *the total absence of any express testimony of the Holy Ghost, in support of it!* Hence, he observes:—"One great, and to me, I confess, invincible objection to the belief of the pre-existence of the human soul of Christ, is the silence of the Holy Ghost upon the subject." In

reply to this objection, the Doctor is reminded, that if he cannot admit the doctrine of the pre-existence to be contained in the scriptures, unless some passage can be produced wherein *the very words are literally expressed*, more is required in this matter than in almost any other. "*We*," says Mr. S., "*neither read of the Trinity, the covenant of grace, nor the satisfaction of Christ; but I presume you will allow, that if the thing be contained as evidently as those particulars are, which you do admit in your creed, you cannot fairly object longer against it.*" It is a pleasing reflection, however, that the controversy in which those excellent men engaged with so much christian forbearance and mutual esteem, is now with respect to themselves, terminated in the bright vision of glory, where they see eye to eye! Mr. Stevens's Letters to the beloved Hawker, will long remain a memento of his polemical talents, and extensive knowledge of the mystery of Christ.

While thus employed in vindicating those views of the Redeemer's glorious person and character which were believed to be essential to his mediatorial office, Mr. Stevens's pastoral ministrations continued to be eminently successful, and the divine blessing abundantly crowned his unwearied labours among the people of his charge. The Lord was constantly giving testimony to the word of his grace by the instrumentality of his servant, and crowds flocking to his ministry seemed to indicate that the truths he so faithfully and energetically proclaimed, were appreciated and eagerly embraced. It has often been remarked, that had Mr. Stevens ranked himself with men whose doctrinal sentiments coincide with the popular taste—had he been the advocate of those views of the gospel which involve a virtual denial of its distinguishing features—he would, doubtless, by the surpassing greatness of his pulpit talents, have acquired a popular influence far exceeding that enjoyed by many preachers of high literary distinction. But the truths he proclaimed, and to which were given a prominency in his ministry, were just those which exhibited the sovereignty of Jehovah, and the perfection of the Redeemer's work, as utterly incompatible with the generally received systems of divinity in the present day. Mr. Stevens, consequently, was *not* a popular preacher, in the usual acceptation of the term; for although thousands, both in town and country, have hung upon his lips, and had their souls lighted up

with spiritual understanding, joy, and praise, from the burning torch of his instructive and eloquent tongue,—the gospel that he preached was *distasteful* to the multitude of professing christians, and in an advancing age of refined speculations upon theological subjects, his views of the old-fashioned gospel of immutable and unfrustrable grace, were by far too antiquated to be regarded otherwise than as obsolete notions and exploded dogmas.

Of this, Mr. Stevens himself was fully aware; but nothing could induce him to relinquish those principles which were dear to his heart, or to yield to a compromise, that would have secured him popular favour, and a welcome reception among the ministers of his own denomination; whose zeal for the evangelization of the world, in his estimation, was characterized by a wide-spreading defection from the truth of God, which seemed to portend an universal darkness, and degeneracy from the purity of the faith. Referring to the subject in a letter written to his friend, Mrs. Pearson, in 1819, he says:—

“The religious world is difficult to understand: a strange stir is made; but I can see no light, beyond what has long existed. If light is needful to scatter darkness, then what are our parsons at? The public is agitated, but truth is not preached! I fear many who talk of converting the heathen, are not converted *themselves*: nor do I apprehend, they half of them believe the doctrines of distinguishing grace to be scriptural. Can we imagine the Holy Ghost will attend the labours of *such* men? I feel I am unable to mingle with the good folks, and that they seem to be, to me, as great strangers almost, as if they made no profession of the gospel of God. I often reflect on these things. I would not err—I mean to own Christ as all in all. I see clearly my views are despised, and that I am unpopular, through my sentiments: but so it must be, until I am convinced of my error; if, indeed, I be in error. I am as much alone as when in the country; and yet I am not alone, for *God is with me*.”

From the fact of Mr. Stevens having conscientiously stood aloof from those individuals and societies whose disregard for the leading doctrines of the gospel was becoming so notorious, it would be unjust to conclude that he was inimical to missionary operations; or that the principles for which he contended, were incompatible with the most strenuous exertions to advance the kingdom of Christ, and promote the salvation of men. Such an inference is most false. The charge it involves is often maliciously uttered, and is a flagrant libel on the character and piety of many of

the most zealous servants of Jesus Christ;—it is *known* to be so by *some* of those who prefer it, and is employed chiefly to convey, by implication, an expression of contempt for those precious truths which, though nominally retained, are practically renounced by most of the Baptist churches. To have been able to unite, cordially and zealously, with others, to extend the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ, would have been gratifying to our departed brother Stevens; nor would any minor differences of sentiment, have prevented his coalescence with the most active and zealous in the missionary cause; but while the truths which he regarded of paramount importance, were denounced by the leading men of our denominational societies; and their agents were notoriously imbued with Arminian principles, and were employed in giving currency to the most flagrant errors; *he considered* that truth, conscience, and consistency, required him to stand alone, rather than by co-operating with those brethren, to use his influence in advancing a system of error, which he honestly believed, was fast tending to the extinction of the distinguishing truths of the gospel, in the generality of the Baptist churches.

Whether such apprehensions have received any degree of confirmation from the subsequent history of the Baptist denomination, or whether their assumed correctness admits of a justifiable ground of non-co-operation with brethren who are the abettors of such objectionable and injurious sentiments, may be left to the reader's candid judgment. It seems, however, impossible to mark the rapid progress which error has made, and the shameless effrontery with which, in the high places of our denomination, its advocates are undermining the most vital and precious doctrines of the gospel, without feeling that honour is due to the men who, foreseeing the tendency of the incipient evil, fearlessly lifted up their voice against it, and as *conscientiously* refrained from identifying themselves with that popular movement, which, doubtless, has materially conduced to its magnitude and prevalence.

On the other hand, it must be regretted that the influence of Mr. Stevens's character and talents, should have been withheld from societies whose primary object is in accordance with the spirit of the great gospel commission,—“Go ye into *all* the world, and preach the gospel to every creature.” And it may be fairly questioned, whether the *fact*,

that those societies having been blessed of God, in effecting the translation of the Holy Scriptures, and in extending his spiritual kingdom among the idolatrous heathen, does not materially mitigate the force of such objections to their principles and operations, as deterred the holy and devoted *Stevens*, from taking any active part in the promotion of those institutions. It is a consideration worthy of being entertained; and we have reason to believe, that *Mr. Stevens* himself long since felt the importance of it; whether the cause of *truth* would not be more effectually promoted, by the advocates of distinguishing grace uniting their influence to *support* those societies; and by taking such prominent part in their proceedings, as would operate as a check upon the errors that are now permitted unrestrainedly to advance and predominate. The excellent John Newton used to remark,—“My principal method for defeating heresy, is to establish truth. One proposes to fill a bushel with tares, now, if I can fill it first with wheat, I shall defy his attempts.” *Mr. Stevens* deplored the necessity which, with his views and feelings on the subject, compelled him to withhold his influence from a cause so noble in its character and objects; but with which was identified so much of an objectionable nature. Yet, perhaps it would be impossible to overrate the amount of benefit, which such influence might have produced, both among the churches at home, and in the various fields of missionary labour. It has been truly said, that “he was a *host* in himself;” and could the energies of his mighty mind have been employed in defence of the truth, in immediate contact with those brethren who have corrupted our missionary institutions with their pernicious sentiments, it may be fairly presumed, that the cause of truth, aided by others who would have rejoiced in its unflinching advocacy, might have had a representation, and realized an influence in those societies, wherein, now alas! the distinguishing verities of the gospel of grace are, with few exceptions, either scornfully repudiated, or systematically compromised.

In the course of divine providence, it pleased the Lord, who directeth the feet of his saints, to dispel the gloom of *Mr. Stevens*’s domestic affliction, by an event which proved a source of great social happiness to him, to the end of his days. His marriage with Miss A. Dickson, occurred in the early part of the year 1820; by whom the residue of his

and agreed to walk together as members of one voluntary body—or church in peace; when they requested me to become their pastor, and I acknowledged and accepted their choice.”

Peace again being restored, and so goodly a number of his friends adhering to him with tried affection, and the more highly valued for the recent proofs of its genuineness and sincerity; Mr. Stevens once more felt himself happy in his labours, which the Lord continued very abundantly to bless, as was indicated both in the numerous additions made to the church, and the increase of the congregation.

Many of the members of the late church also, who had forsaken him in the day of his trouble, and through the influence of other parties, had opposed him in the late unhappy dispute, returned to York Street, and acknowledging their error, were restored to membership, and the enjoyment of their privileges, under his ministry. During many years, indeed, Mr. Stevens not unfrequently had the pleasure of receiving into the church persons, who had censured his proceedings, and combined with his enemies to defame his public character, and injure his usefulness. This testimony, spontaneously borne by his mistaken friends, must have been a gratifying confirmation of the righteousness of his cause; and it doubtless yielded him great consolation, under the injuries he had sustained.

But his confidence was in God, who saveth the upright in heart; and in the constant service of his divine Master, he enjoyed signal manifestations of his favour and approbation, while with a devotedly attached people, he continued to labour with gratifying success.

In the year 1823, Mr. Stevens first published his work, intituled, “*The Saviour’s Purchase and the Sinner’s Right; or, the Doctrine of Purchased Blessings explained and vindicated.*”

The subject of this treatise had long been a controverted point among those who were agreed in the principal and fundamental doctrines of distinguishing grace: Mr. Stevens states the question to be, “Whether the spiritual blessings which are given us in Christ; blessings which are needful for us as fallen creatures, ought to be considered and represented as the *procurement* of Christ’s meritorious obedience and death; or, whether a legal right to that grace and glory which the elect will all finally enjoy, was *obtained, procured, or purchased* by the merits of Christ for them?”

Mr. S. took the affirmative of this question, and considered its maintenance not a little important to the *honour* of Christ's priestly character and office.

In his introduction, he remarks, "That Arminians, Baxterians, and Socinians, should assert the negative, is no more than might be expected; that lovers of unconditional and infallible salvation through Jesus Christ should unite with them in so doing, has long appeared to me not a little extraordinary. The Arminian readily observes, that if he were to admit that Christ *purchased* the principle of faith for all those for whom he died, he must then allow that Christ did not die for all men, because the greater part of men never become the subjects of faith. Therefore, rather than authorize the sentiment, he will insist upon it that Christ *purchased nothing* for those for whom he died." By others, also, it is deemed a sentiment "incompatible with *the love of God to his elect*; inconsistent with the *covenant of promise in Christ*, and irreconcilable with an *absolute and unforfeitable interest in Christ by eternal election*, as well as with the *personal right* which they suppose Christ had to all spiritual blessings as God over all, blessed for ever."

In support of his view of the subject, Mr. Stevens submits and illustrates the following propositions:—"That the love of God to his chosen, as unfallen, must not be confounded with his gifts to them as sinners: that God's loving his people does not of itself invest them with a personal right to the pardon of their sins, and so not to other spiritual blessings: that divine love never left the salvation of its objects to be dubious, but that it moved infinite wisdom to contrive that it might be *just*: that Christ's *personal right* is not that on which he intercedes, nor is it that on which *our right* is upheld: that Christ and his chosen members must be considered in union by the sovereign will of God, in order to pardon, and other spiritual blessings being acquired for them: that redemption and purchase are not synonymous terms: that Christ's *essential* fulness should not be confounded with his communicable fulness: that a redemption of persons from all evil to all good, necessarily includes a *procurement* of all spiritual blessings: that as the blessings referred to proceed from the hand of impartial justice to guilty men, they *must be meritoriously procured*." The whole argument is sustained with the writer's usual ability, and the con-

clusion is firmly established, that among other benefits conferred by divine sovereignty, it "promises all the blessings requisite for the perfection and felicity of the lapsed family of God, *on the condition of Christ's mediation*, and hence arises to them a *legal right* to all grace and glory through a sovereign relation to the author and giver of them."

From the period of the re-formation of the church in 1823, Mr. Stevens kept a journal, or text-book, in which is found inserted all the texts from which he preached, together with the dates and places of delivery, entered with great regularity and precision, with which also are noted down the various frames and feelings of his mind at the time. Though his remarks are very concise, they are frequently very interesting, and having been evidently written for his own exclusive use, they present the surest index of his heart. Herein we perceive those excellencies of spiritual and ministerial character with which he was so eminently enriched, and which imparted that vigour and savour to his discourses and conversations for which he was so distinguished.

A few extracts occasionally given from this textual diary, it is hoped may not be uninteresting to many readers.

"May 4, 1823.—Had a feast and a good day. Read Ezekiel xx. and xxxvii. morning and evening. Saw Mr. R., of S—. Dined with Mr. and Mrs. G. Returned home much cheered through the pleasures of the day, and a little thankful for my privileges, to the Lord."

"May 6.—Preached for H.'s friends at their anniversary, from Mal. i. 11. A most miserable time, a wretched sermon; yet I spent the preceding day in close attention in my study. Alas! what a poor thing I am without my God. I had, however, a sweet though transient glimpse of my Lord the preceding evening at the prayer-meeting. Blessed be his name for every favour,—*I deserve none.*"

"May 7.—Took my morning's walk in the park. Had very little elevation of mind to what I sometimes have. Spent the rest of the day in the study, and preached with some sweet pleasure in the evening from 2 Cor. v. 5, first part. Hope some of my hearers were benefited, and the Lord glorified. Prepare me, O Lord, for thy right hand."

"May 11.—Preached with much pleasure and enlargement in the morning from Psa. cxxxix. 23, 24, except the last clause of the 24th verse, which I read in the evening, when I was much helped, but not so elevated as in the morning. I preached in the afternoon at Grafton Street, for Mr. W. Had a happy time in prayer, and some freedom in preaching from Isa. lv. 10, 11. It was on the whole a day of mercy; the Lord be praised."

"May 13.—At home mostly. Had some solemn feelings in family prayer. My dear son John went off this morning, for St. Neot's: may the Lord preserve him, and keep him near himself. My dear wife and her sister set off to-day on a visit to Mr. and Mrs. A.

"May 14.—Preached on 1 Cor. xii. 27, with much pleasure to myself and I hope some profit to my hearers. O how sweet is the work when the Lord is there! May I ever live on Christ as my Head of fulness and endless life."

"May 15.—I went to Woolwich, and preached in the evening at Mr. S.'s chapel, on those words, "For ye are all one in Christ." Was rather dull, and again found I could do nothing well without Christ. Mr. — supped with me at Mr. —'s, but the conversation was but light. We stopped to dine on Friday, and Mr. A. very kindly took me out in his chaise for a ride. How unworthy am I of the kindness of the Lord, and of his people. O for more gratitude!

"May 18, Lord's-day.—Preached twice; in the morning with some degree of enlargement from Matt. xiii. 33. In the evening, on 1 John iv. 7. Had much liberty, though my subject was but ill-arranged, and attended with difficulty. O that I and all my friends may aim to exemplify it in our lives."

"May 19.—In the study all day, expecting to go the next day to Dorman's Land. I studied a discourse for the purpose, as I thought, but afterwards chose others. Attended the prayer-meeting, was very dull, and had fresh evidence that without the Holy Spirit's influences our prayers are poor, cold, disorderly things. Made a few remarks, which some seemed to enjoy."

"May 21.—Preached at the chapel at Dorman's Land twice, with great liberty and pleasure, from Acts x. 36, and Isa. xlv. 17, first part. There were many people, and many dined in the chapel, *but I never enjoy those entertainments that are of a public kind.*"

"May 22.—Returned home with my friend H., who is a good and a kind man. The Lord reward him for his kind aid to me in my late trouble."

"May 24.—Close in the study all day; found some liberty in meditation on certain subjects with a view to the following day."

"May 25.—Preached in the morning on 1 John ii. 12, with great liberty and power. O the sweetness of the divine presence and the pleasantness of the Lord's work when he is there himself! Was rather bound in spirit in prayer, both parts of the day; this I painfully felt, but I believe that he hides his face in love. Evening; preached on Col. ii. 6, was prolix and dull, and returned home fretful. The Lord forgive all my sins. I ought to be thankful that I have received Christ, though often I enjoy so little of what I believe. Quickened my soul, O Lord."

"May 27.—Rose very early,—wrote to Mr. R.; and was engaged the whole of the day in cleaning my study, altering the arrangement of my books. . . . How much dust collects about good books! how often they require turning and cleaning. The like is true of my soul, yea, of good men in general; they often require dusting or wiping clean. The Lord show us all compassion, for we are but dust, and prone to gather more defilement."

"June 8.—My birthday! Forty-seven years have I been led and fed in this vale of tears. Many mercies have I witnessed from the

hand of my merciful Father, and still have a sustaining hope that his kindness shall ever abide."

"June 14.—In the study: had no small anxiety about my subjects for the next day; prayed and *groaned*, and retired in hope of arranging my thoughts the next morning."

"June 15.—Was *bound in spirit in family prayer*, rather dull in the morning service, though some flashes of pleasure were felt. Many of my hearers seemed to enjoy the sermon more than I did. In the evening I had *some liberty* on John iii. 4."

"June 18.—Spent the day in the study, and preached in the evening on Rom. v. 3—5. A long and faulty discourse. O how much mercy I need as a minister! yet not more than I hope to find through the blood of the exalted Lamb. O that my patience may be increased, my experience enriched, the value of truth proved, and my hope confirmed!"

"June 22.—Had a good day, even an extraordinary time; in the morning from the words of the apostle Paul concerning Christ, 2 Cor. v. 21, 'Who knew no sin.' In the evening, the rest of the verse, and a tolerably good opportunity. How confirming are these times! How kind is the Lord! May my soul glorify his name continually."

"June 24.—Dined at Hampstead, heard Mr. Rees in the morning, from Col. i. 13. In the evening I preached from John vi. 45; said much, but I felt sadly bound in spirit. Returned home much distressed and cast down. How our pride torments us! Oh that I could feel more for the glory of God!"

"June 29, Lord's-day.—*A trying day, and a day of disappointment*, but I hope a useful day. The Lord seems resolved to keep me humble as a minister. O that I could more cheerfully acquiesce in his will! I preached morning and evening on Isa. l. 3, was much dissatisfied with my sermons, fearing my hearers would be unedified. But God can bless truth, however feebly discussed. I hope to see him again, and feel his heart-expanding smiles."

It is gratifying thus to take a view of the man of God in the seclusions of his retired occupation, and to behold him whose superiority of intellect and gigantic mind were so conspicuous in his public ministrations, humbled before God, and, with the simplicity of a child, holding communion with his heavenly Father, in the inner sanctuary of his own heart. Mr. Stevens was eminently a man of *prayer*; it was evidently mingled with all his exercises. Communion with God was the element in which he daily lived—his native air, his vital breath, and the life of his spirit in the great facts of divine revelation. The deep-felt sense of his entire dependence expressed in the foregoing extracts, and the painful exercises of his mind at times, in the study and ministration of the word of God, may appear strangely to contrast with the general fulness and excellence of his public exercises: but those depressed feelings doubtless

operated as a salutary check upon the natural influence of enlarged gifts, of the possession of which he must necessarily have felt a degree of consciousness. The loftiest vine, as well as the feeblest sapling, not only requires support, but its dependence is proportionate to its strength; while the operations of the pruning knife are rendered the more necessary by the luxuriance of its growth and appearance.

The success which attended Mr. Stevens's ministry immediately after the lamented division of the church, must have been greatly encouraging. In the first year, no less than 79 persons were received into their communion. At the anniversary meeting of the new formation of the church, the number of members amounted to 242, and there appeared every indication of the Lord's gracious designs to turn the captivity of his people, restore their former desolations, and build again the waste places of Zion.

For some time past, Mr. S. had revolved in his mind the expediency of erecting a new chapel, which was at length determined; and having procured an eligible piece of ground, situate in Meard's Court, Wardour Street, Soho,—*Salem Chapel* was forthwith erected, and finished in the summer of 1824. It is a spacious building, capable of containing above 1,000 persons; and, with the galleries subsequently erected, cost £4,000. This formidable undertaking Mr. Stevens *commenced* entirely on his own responsibility, without the promise of the least assistance in meeting the outlay. His friends, however, fully concurred in the design, and generously contributed towards the expense of the erection. After the lapse of some years, the debt on the chapel became sufficiently reduced to render a mortgage easy to obtain, and the chapel was forthwith placed in trust for the use of the church and congregation. Mr. Stevens preached his last discourse at York Street on Wednesday evening, Sept. 15, 1824, from Joshua iii. 3; and on the following Lord's-day, Salem chapel was publicly opened for the worship of God, three sermons being delivered on the occasion; Mr. Murrell, of St. Neots, preached in the morning on 2 Chron. vi. 18: "*But will God in very deed dwell with men,*" &c. The discourse was truly appropriate, and presented a typical view of Jehovah's residence in the Son of his love, and in the spiritual temple of his church.

The afternoon sermon was preached by Mr. Reynolds, late of Wattisham, and now of Eynsford, Kent, who took for his text, Psalm xxxvi. 7, 8: "*How excellent is thy loving kindness, O God, therefore*" &c. The causal and effectual influence of Jehovah's loving kindness towards his people formed the basis of the discourse, which was heard with much pleasure and profit.

The services of the day were concluded by a discourse in the evening from Mr. Stevens on Exodus xx. 24: "*In all places where I record my name, I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee.*"

Some introductory remarks were offered on the NAME Jehovah, as recorded among the Israelites—symbolized in the ark of the testimony, and exhibited in the Angel of his presence, of whom he saith, "*My name is in him.*" Ex. xxiii. 31.

The record of his name and the promise of his presence, were the fundamental topics of discourse, wherein was shown:—

1. The record of Jehovah's name in the Son of his Love, the first copy of his perfections, impressed on him as the glory-man, before *our time* on earth began.

2. That name, as recorded in the incarnation of the Son of God, and in all he did, said, and suffered: John i. 14, and xiv. 10.

3. The name of Jehovah as recorded in all his heaven-born children, who are thereby conformed to his image in practical sanctity.

4. As recorded in his gospel church; in its constitution, laws, order, and ordinances; but especially in the gospel ministry, which testifies of him that wears that name in all the eternal excellencies, beauty, and glory of his saving offices, characters, and relations.

The second part of the discourse presented a beautiful illustration of Jehovah's promised presence among his people—"I will come unto thee, and I will bless thee."

1. With an increase of numbers: Psalm cx. 1, 2, 3. 2. With unity and peace as one in him, in whom truth and peace are combined. 3. With enlarged and delightful views of the system of redeeming mercy, which shall elevate the soul in gospel holiness. Thus his truth shall be declared, sinners converted, saints edified, their affections elevated, their sanctity increased, and the whole church with the glory-cloud covered.

The above discourse was delivered with an unction and sweet savour that rendered it peculiarly delightful to his spiritual hearers, and was listened to by a crowded audience with profound attention. The presence of the Lord was powerfully felt on the interesting occasion, and it was felt that his NAME as then recorded in SALEM was the pledge of future gracious visits from the king of righteousness and prince of peace.

It has been already seen, however, that seasons of darkness and bondage were not unfrequently experienced by Mr. Stevens, in his ministerial exercises. On the first sabbath after the opening of the chapel, his mind appears to have been much contracted and distressed in his work. Alluding to the services of that day in his journal, he writes—"O how distressed was I in attempting to preach! *A more trying time I have seldom found, if ever.* Lord, pity thy poor afflicted servant, and return to his aid. The Lord is all-sufficient for the ministry, he can help *even me to preach.*"

The following account of the erection of Salem chapel, appears in Ivimey's History of the Baptists, vol. iv, page 385. It was furnished by Mr. Stevens's pen, and published in the year 1830; but was evidently written two or three years earlier. Mr. Stevens says:—

"I felt a wish to procure a place, if possible, of less dimension, less expense, and more suited to the wants of a church of our own denomination; we had no convenient vestries at York Street, nor could we have a baptistery.

"It was on my part a bold undertaking to venture to build a place of the size, and with the conveniences I wanted. Having reflected, prayed, and thought it over, as the Lord whom I served, and for the defence of whose righteous cause I had suffered, put it in my power to build; I determined to submit what I had, and trust Him to bring me through. I said, he had provided before I had five pounds in the world; what I have is his. He gave himself for me—I only lay down a little money, and it may be reserved to me in his cause; and if not, his will be done. I proceeded without the promise of five pounds from any one. I have been brought thus far through, and do hope the place will be settled in trust, and become the property of the church. It was opened for worship on Lord's-day, Sept. 19, 1824. We have now about 350 members. The people have acted very liberally according to their circumstances; they have not raised so little as one thousand six hundred pounds since the erection, and are now going to put up two side galleries, for which the money is mostly promised before they begin. At the same time we do not raise so little as one hundred pounds per annum for poor members,

besides extra gifts in emergent cases. I believe the hand of the Lord is with us, though I often long to see and feel more of the sacred influence that flows from the chosen Head of the chosen body, ordained to perfection through the real redemption, effected when Jesus died for us."

The galleries were erected in the summer of 1827, and the pastor of Salem had the happiness of beholding within its walls, a prosperous and happy people, increasing in numerical strength, united in the bonds of truth and love, and striving together for the faith of the gospel. The following extracts from his Journal, recorded at this period, may here be acceptable, as farther expressing in his own language the exercises of his mind in reference to his public and private labours. Indeed, sketches taken from these unvarnished portraits of his heart, cannot fail, it is believed, of being interesting to a large circle of his friends.

"Sept. 27, 1824.—Took my farewell of my dear brother Henry Hatchard, when I left to go into the country."

"Oct. 1.—Came home, and learned that my brother Hatchard died at one o'clock in the morning. The Lord has given, and he has taken away, blessed be his name. I have lost a faithful and kind friend, but heaven has obtained an inhabitant."

"Oct. 13.—*A most trying time* on Heb. xiii. 20, 21. *O what an absence of influence did I experience!* But the Lord doeth as it pleaseth him. I merit nothing at his hand, except a punishment he will not inflict."

"Jan. 9, 1825.—Read Gal. iii. 13—14. A good time. In the evening, Matt. xviii. 14. A very enlarged gift of utterance. O how powerful is the Spirit of the Lord to open man's mouth! My soul praise the Lord."

"Jan. 11.—At Mr. ——— to dine, spent a very dull evening, at least to myself, and came home repenting and grieving. O what useless—to say the least of it—what useless meetings are *large parties*. O for less form and more power among professors."

"April 17.—A good day blessed be God, on Heb. v. 14; and John xvi. 33. How confirming are his love visits to a sinful worm!"

"May 22.—Mark x. 26; a good time, yet not the best, but merciful to a wretched sinner like me."

"May 29.—Had through the rich mercy of my God, a day of great help and happiness, though much tried in gaining a settled mind, as to what particular subjects I should discuss. Much time I spent on Psalm cxxxi. 2, and in the evening of Saturday was obliged to resign it. I read in the morning Isaiah xxviii. 16. Evening, 'Looking for that blessed hope,' and had much liberty in both."

"April 9, 1826.—This day was I tried indeed, having to speak on subjects I had not intended reading at the time. Some friends from

—were present. O how sinful must my heart be, for the Lord to see it needful thus to treat me. May his glory redound from my denials and trials. This will sanctify my sufferings to a noble end; the hope of this sheds a degree of contenting influence, while I remember it. Preached from Psalm cxli. 1, 2, and Rom. viii. 5."

"May 16.—Attended the ordination of Mr. —, where I was sorely tried, and more so afterward, on reviewing the defects of my discourse. O what a poor preacher I am! O what a great Saviour is my Christ!"

"June 8.—This day I am fifty years of age—have been about thirty of them in the ministry—have had many happy days in my work, and though many times I have been shut up in my feelings, yet more, many more, have been my days of liberty than of darkness. The Lord has dealt bountifully with me; I have had my sore trials; but believe that all have been in mercy to me. Bless the Lord, O my soul, that there is in reserve a land of rest and joy, where thy Redeemer reigns, and where thou shalt finally appear. A few days more will end the cares and griefs of this wilderness life; in Jesus let thy confidence remain, and for his kingdom willingly endure the remaining trials of shortening time, so soon to end."

"July 8.—I spent this day at —, not with much profit I fear, but some things were said that seemed useful. In the morning of this day my good friend, Mr. —, was found in dying circumstances, in his bed. How uncertain is this life! How valuable the interest of the gospel! Prepare my heart, O God, to appear before thee with holy freedom in the Lord Jesus, my perfecting Head and sure salvation."

"July 31.—Felt a pleasing glimpse, a few minutes, of His presence whose friendship is better than life."

"Aug. 6.—Read 1 John i. 7, last part. Had a tolerable time, but not so truly carried out in the spirit, as at some times. Evening, Rom. v. 2, 'Rejoicing in hope of the glory of God.' A blessed evening: thanks be to him that sits in the heavens a Prince and a Saviour."

"Oct. 9.—A pleasant evening indeed: bless the Lord, O my soul."

"Oct. 11.—A sorely barren and confined time. O, how was I shut up upon a subject that I have often enjoyed so well! Lord, what a helpless thing I am without thee. How needful is thy Holy Spirit to make a minister, and how requisite his influence to maintain a useful gift. My text was 1 John ii. 20; but I could not preach, though I talked for above an hour! Pity and pardon me, O my God."

"May 23, 1829.—At Salem; read John xvii. 26. Had some aid, but not like some seasons. It was a mercy, however, I was not wretched. The least help and utterance is above anything that I could claim. I was favoured in prayer with a solemn and placid enjoyment of truth and future prospects."

"June 21.—I removed to Upper Thornhaugh Street. May the Lord deign to dwell with me in my new residence; then it will be a Bethel."

"July 6.—My dear father was removed to his eternal rest on Friday, July 6, aged 79 years, after a long illness, which he bore with exemplary patience and hope of glory. He had been expected to die in 1822."

During the interim between Mr. Stevens's removal from Aldwinkle and his settlement in London, his father had come with his whole family to reside in the metropolis, where, at Sion chapel, Whitechapel, in Lady Huntingdon's connexion, he for some time officiated as clerk; but upon Mr. Stevens becoming the pastor of the church at Grafton Street, he regularly attended his son's ministry, though he had five or six miles to walk. Other members of his family also, not unfrequently were among his hearers, one of whom, his youngest brother, is still a member at Meard's Court, now bereaved of its pastor.

The following is one of several letters written by Mr. Stevens to his aged father a short time before his death. It strikingly exhibits that filial regard which was not the least interesting feature of his character.

"My dear Father,—I am hoping that as your infirmities are increasing, and your final change hastening upon you, the good and gracious God of heaven, who has led and fed you all your life long to this day, will deign to be with you in the latest moments of your mortality, and fill your heart with joy and peace in believing, through the power of the Holy Spirit. His unexpected love at first drew you to his throne, to his house, and especially to Christ, as an *only* and *all-sufficient* Saviour. That love is still the same, it can never resign its objects, nor fail to secure their *persons*, their *rights*, their *peace*, and their *joy*. It moves God in the present world, and in the world to come, to show forth the riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. In love he rebukes his chosen, to embitter their folly, and to bring them to *cleave* to, and *trust* in *himself*. Should you find your mind dark and gloomy, remember he has kindly said, let the man who fears me, believes my word, and walketh in darkness, and has no light or comfort, trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon his God: Isaiah l. 10.

"He is a faithful God, even when he hideth himself, so that we cannot behold him. Isaiah said, 'I will wait upon God who hideth his face from the house of Jacob, and I will look for him:' chap. viii. 17. 'For a small moment I have forsaken thee, saith the Lord; but with great mercies will I gather thee. In a little wrath I hid my face from thee for a moment, but with everlasting kindness will I have mercy on thee, saith the Lord thy Redeemer.' O-how great is his mercy, and how sure is his friendship. He remembereth our frame, that we are but dust; nor will he permit us to be tried beyond what he will help us to bear: 1 Cor. x. 13. For the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but my kindness shall not depart from thee; neither shall the covenant of my peace be removed, saith THE LORD, that hath mercy on THEE! The lofty and rooted mountains are not so unmoveable and secure as his boundless grace and pity. He is rich and unalterable in his mercy, through the great love wherewith he hath *loved* us! He is ever willing to show to the believing heirs of

his promise, the immutability of his counsel ; and has therefore given them his *word* and his *oath*, that by these two immutable things, in which it is *impossible for God to lie*, they might have a strong consolation who have fled for refuge, to lay hold of the hope set before them ; which hope *they have* as an ANCHOR of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which entereth into that within the veil, whither the FORERUNNER is for us entered, even Jesus, made an High Priest for ever. Entered FOR US, my father, to represent us, to intercede for us, to prepare for us, and to secure our arrival as after-runners. We are after him ; we are looking to him who is the beginning of our faith, to be the finisher of it. Faith looks to Jesus, relies on Jesus, pleads the precious cleansing blood of Jesus. Faith is the evidence of things invisible, and gives them a kind of subsistence in our minds. We are daily believing to see the goodness of the Lord, and are thus taught to walk by faith all our way through this mortal state. Our hope is ruled by what we believe, and our love is influenced and directed through faith. Our souls are filled with knowledge through believing, and by God's light so shining *to us* and *in us*, we walk through darkness, and look to heaven as our promised and final home ! There is no *sighing* nor *suffering* there : no *poverty*, no *fear*, no *enemy*, no *deadness of soul* is there ! There we shall have joy without sorrow, and life without the possibility of dying. God shall wipe away all tears from our eyes, and the days of our mourning shall be for ever ended. Put on Christ's spotless obedience, there is no condemnation in it ; it justifies from all things ; it entitles the wearer to an enjoyment of the upper world. This glorious robe is, I trust, your present covering and daily boast. Expect the Lord to be with you as your *portion* and *guide*, even unto death.

I am till then, your Affectionate Son,
J. STEVENS."

His aged mother survived her husband but little more than twelve months, departing this life in Dec. 1828 ; of whose final rest, Mr. Stevens expresses in his Journal an encouraging hope.

About the beginning of the year 1826, the Rev. John Rees instituted a weekly lecture at Bury Street chapel, and in his introductory discourse, attacked the doctrine of Christ's pre-existence, affirming it to be "a species of refined Arianism, and degrading to the divine person of our Lord Jesus Christ." This induced Mr. Stevens to address a letter to that gentlemen, intituled, "A further Defence of the Antiquity of Jesus," including strictures on the above mentioned discourse, with a notice of objections urged against the doctrine by the Rev. H. Evans and others. Truly Mr. Stevens's opponents began to multiply ; but, nothing daunted, he betook himself to the sword of the Spirit, and once more we find him engaged in a *friendly* disputation on a subject that was dear to his heart, as

connected with the ancient character and glory of his divine Lord.

A variety of objections and arguments were urged by Mr. Rees against the antiquity of our Lord's manhood; some of them indeed quite irrelevant to the subject in dispute; and others requiring no very considerable effort to demolish. The alleged derogatory tendency of the sentiment, however, brought Mr. S. into close contact with his opponent, and aroused him to the contest in right earnest. Mr. Stevens contends that antiquity, so far from being derogatory to our dear Lord, is highly honourable to his character; and as Mr. Rees had affirmed the doctrine of pre-existence to be "a species of refined Arianism," he is reminded that Arianism requires the *exclusion* of every thing human from our Lord's person, save a *body*; hence it appears that no *refinement* whatever, connected with the doctrine of the pre-existence, can warrant so unwarrantable a reflection. It is argued that "He who has *now* a human soul without degrading his divine person, might have the same human soul from the beginning of the world without any degradation:" that "He who became man 1826 years ago, without ceasing to be God, might have become man 4000 sooner, without ceasing to be God;" that "that which honours Christ as God-man, cannot degrade him as God; but the sentiment which assigns priority and pre-eminence to the God-man must honour him, therefore that sentiment cannot degrade him as God." Having refuted the charges alleged by Mr. Rees against the advocates of the doctrine, Mr. Stevens proceeds to demolish the strong holds of his opponent, by demonstrating the truth of the following proposition:—"That if God had a begotten Son existing from the beginning, and so before the birth of Christ at Bethlehem, pre-existence must be admitted as a truth irrefragable."

The letter is well written, and is a valuable appendage to the author's other works on the same subject.

Among the people of his charge Mr. Stevens was surrounded by circumstances highly calculated to encourage him and strengthen his hands in the Lord. During a period of four or five years from the new organization of the church, about 200 members had been added to their number, and the most enlivening prosperity was witnessed within their borders. The name of the city was Jehovah

Shammah—"The Lord is there!" "In SALEM was his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion."

It was not only among his own people that Mr. Stevens's ministry was highly appreciated. Having laboured several years in different parts of the country, he had formed connexions of an interesting character with various distant churches, among whom he was received as a Father, and by whom the privilege of his occasional society and ministrations was greatly valued. From his ministerial services in those places had arisen numerous attachments, which it was gratifying, equally to himself as to others, to maintain and cultivate by occasional correspondence and visits. He therefore not unfrequently took a tour around those parts of Lincolnshire, Huntingdonshire, and Cambridgeshire, where he had formerly laboured with acceptance and success, and where he was still welcomed by multitudes of those who were attached to the great truths he was accustomed to proclaim. He greatly enjoyed those visits while his health remained, and enabled him to serve the cause of his Divine Master, by preaching frequently in his journies. He did not on those occasions leave his home merely for recreation and cessation from labour; preaching the gospel was his congenial element, as much in the course of his friendly visits in the country, as in the regular occupations of home. He would sometimes employ a fortnight or three weeks in this manner, in visiting his friends and the churches at St. Neots, Godmanchester, Warboys, Willingham, Boston, Spalding, and other places. He ever felt a peculiar attachment to the churches at Boston and St. Neots, to the establishment of which his early labours had much contributed. There he enjoyed many endearing friendships, and there, as in many other places, his memory is embalmed in the affections, both of pastors and people.

Circumstances of a family nature, also, concurred to considerably strengthen the attachments which had been formed by his early connexion with the church at St. Neots. His eldest son, a promising and excellent young man, had resided several years in that town. He had married Miss Frances Fairy, daughter of Mr. Samuel Fairy, the senior deacon of that church, and his father's intimate and long tried friend. Mr. John Stevens, jun. having become a member of the church at St. Neots, it was soon perceived by his friends, that his mental superiority and eminent

piety, indicated the possession of ministerial gifts; the subsequent exercise of which presented satisfactory proof of the correctness of their opinions. The intelligence that his son had attempted to speak in the name of the Lord, was not displeasing to Mr. Stevens; but the sense he entertained of the importance of such a step, and his godly jealousy for the purity of his son's motives, dictated the following salutary hint, contained in one of his affectionate letters:—"May God Almighty bless and keep you. I have heard that you have been induced to attempt to speak in public in the name of the Lord. May the hand of the Lord herein direct you—*except you must preach, I hope you will be led to desist.* The Lord I hope will direct you—he is all-sufficient."

Such parental admonition might indeed be truly useful, and prove a blessing to many, were it given to some other ministers' sons, instead of fostering in their minds academical predilections, and "*training them up for the ministry,*" from their earliest boyhood. The following passage from another of Mr. Stevens's letters contains an interesting expression of his solicitous regard for his beloved son, in reference to the same subject:—

"September 26, 1828.

"My dear Son,—I was glad to hear of your welfare—glad to hear of your enjoyment of divine things—and that you had been sustained to speak in public; but to attempt it *thrice* in one day can scarcely be deemed discreet. Young men will overstep the line in point of zeal—extraordinary cases however, are to be allowed a claim.

"I hope you are very seriously considering what you are taking up—what solemnity will become the office—what cheerfulness it will require—what zeal for God and truth—what knowledge—what readiness in citing Scripture—what courage—what patience—what steadiness—what prayerfulness—what love of Christ—what full views of his person, office, work, Spirit, and fulness—what independence of man—what dependence on God—what perseverance in hard study—what endurance of temptation—what humility—what self-denial—what love of God and man—what tenderness of conscience—what fluency of utterance—what indifference to human commendation—what uprightness of motive,—these, my son, and many more good things that I cannot now express, are and ever will be needful. You know who must give them, and what is your duty respecting them. Pray watch and pray—and the Lord give you understanding in all things. Be little enough: Hosea xiii. 1."

It was Mr. Stevens's happiness to realize in the superior ministerial qualifications of his son, the fulfilment of his

ardent desires concerning him. He proved himself "an able minister of the New Testament," and his steps were soon directed in the providence of God to labour at Willingham in Cambridgeshire, with the church late under the pastoral care of Mr. Rootham, deceased; over whom he was recognized in the pastoral office on Sept. 9, 1829. On that interesting occasion Mr. Stevens gave his son a faithful charge, founded on Col. iv. 17: "Take heed to the ministry that thou hast received of the Lord, that thou fulfil it." The union thus formed appeared truly auspicious; the church at Willingham found in Mr. John Stevens an affectionate pastor, an amiable friend, and a highly talented minister of Jesus Christ. Their affection for him increased with a knowledge of his character, and their happiness as a church seemed to be complete. The ministerial gifts and usefulness of his beloved son yielded Mr. Stevens the sincerest pleasure, and to see him employed in proclaiming those truths which were the scope of his own ministry, afforded him unmingled satisfaction and joy. But how transient was this happiness! The flower which had opened and bloomed with so much promise was soon to be gathered. Scarcely had Mr. John Stevens entered on his work, and witnessed the opening of a new and spacious chapel at Willingham for his use, when a pale consumption commenced its ravages upon his naturally weak constitution, and quickly severed him from his beloved charge, leaving them, with his youthful widow and three children, to mourn their great loss. He slept in Jesus on April 2nd, 1831, in the 30th year of his age. The event was painfully felt by Mr. Stevens, who, immediately on receiving the mournful intelligence, wrote the following letter of condolence and sympathy to the afflicted widow:—

"Monday, April 4, 1831.

"My dear bereaved Daughter,—I am saying in the words of the weeping prophet, 'My wound is grievous—truly this is a grief, and I must bear it:' Jer. x. 19. And as Job, 'For my sighing cometh before I eat, and my roarings are poured out like the waters: for the thing which I greatly feared is come upon me, and that which I was afraid of is come unto me:' Job iii. 24. Yet it becometh us to restrain our grief, that it become not excessive in itself and offensive to God. He has done as it has pleased him, and he is Lord of us and all we have. O, my dear, how infinitely important is it, that grace came to your husband, so evidently, before disease and death laid his body lifeless before you. We would gladly have retained him—his friends would gladly have retained him, but his heavenly Lord had occasion for him

in the church above. His time was ended—his work was done—and O, important fact to him, his sorrows were ended!!

“Had I known his end was so near, I would not have left him; but this was not intended to be. I am grateful that his precious soul was so composed, and that his pains were short; ~~he~~ ^{he} is contented and grateful, let us endeavour to restrain our grief, lest we become rebellious. We may, we must weep; but, my dear daughter, we must not forget that ~~he~~ cannot mourn over the change, though ~~we~~ can hardly forbear to be exceedingly grieved. Let us hope to go to him, though he cannot come back to us. How uncertain are all things here! What a vapour is human life! In this life we have no certainty, no abiding city; and this trying event admonishes us not to live to ourselves or to our fellow-creatures unduly; but to live unto the Lord. Heaven, my dear, will make amends for all at last. Consider the next world as the chief object of your care: God will never leave you forsaken, nor the dear babes he has given you; had he not intended to support you as a widow, and to provide for your children, he would not have taken their dear father from them. My heart aches, and my tears flow while I write; but I know it is all for the glory of God, and while nature keenly smarts, faith acknowledges, and love adores, the holy Lord God, who has taken what he gave, and answered prayers, and shown his love in the very change that occasions us the pain we feel. Your sorrowful case is yet more fraught with mercy, than was that of Eli’s daughter-in-law: 1 Sam. iv. 19.

“But I hope to see you on Wednesday evening, if spared. I should be obliged if one of the friends meet me at ——. May the Lord help me to bear my sad loss with the firmness and reverence that is becoming one who is seeking to glorify God here, and to dwell with him for ever hereafter. I cannot write more; accept my most warm affection and interested sympathy, my dear daughter: that Christ may be your strength, is the prayer of

Your afflicted Father, in Christ,
J. STEVENS.”

Though filled with grief under the afflictive stroke, Mr. Stevens was helped to speak over the remains of that son in whom his paternal hopes had rested—whom he had solemnly *charged to fulfil his ministry*, and who, within so short a period, had not only *fulfilled* it, but had been honoured! released!! crowned!!!

“Own’d in his work, in every labour blest,
Approv’d of God! and then dismissed to rest.”

The following admirable letter of affectionate solicitude, was addressed by Mr. Stevens to his afflicted daughter-in-law, soon after his return from the funeral of his son:—

“April 18, 1831.

“My dear Daughter,—That I hourly think of you, of the dear children, and of the church at Willingham, I can safely say, and I need not add, of him whose absence we all feel very sensibly. But I

wish to have my mind regulated by just and lawful views, and to worship while I weep. The Lord whom we adore has an indisputable right over all we are and have, and is accomplishing his wise designs concerning his chosen people, and their eternal blessedness. Thus heaven is gaining what earth loses. While we weep in the change, our departed friend rejoices in it. Yet frail and selfish are we—but earth cannot be heaven, any more than heaven can be earth.—Jesus wept.

“I hope you continue in health, and that your mind is kept up to the views of truth and of God’s management, which we talked of when I was with you. If we pass on in such a path as seems marked out for us, it must be by faith. The Lord is all-sufficient, he can do everything, Job xlii. 2; on him let us cast our care, he careth for us. God’s care for the widow is specially testified in his word. See Exodus xxii. 22, 23; Deut. x. 18, and xiv. 29; Psalm lxviii. 5, and cxlvi. 9; Proverbs xv. 25; Jer. xlix. 11; 1 Tim. v. 3, 5. He knows where you are and what you need, nor shall your cry be disregarded before him.

“Your encouragement and duty are connected in their grounds—and these grounds are :—

“I. *A steadfast belief of, and adherence to the divine word*: and that when things appear so contrary to natural views: Rom. iv. 18, 20, 21.

“II. *Submission to the divine will*: this will is directed by infinite wisdom, and cannot but be, ultimately, most for the glory of God and the welfare of his people. It arises from his sovereign and immense goodness, and can do no real injury to any one. Eli acknowledged it, Aaron bowed to it, and so did Job and David. It is by yielding to the divine will that we best conquer our own. You remember who said, ‘Nevertheless not my will, but thine be done.’ And the same holy Friend of sinners taught his disciples to say in prayer, ‘Thy will be done.’ He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. If he will our crown, why should he not will our cross? though we groan under its weight, let us not rebel against the will that ordained it for our good. The more we see of God in any trial, the lighter it becomes. His love will not permit him to lay on us more than is bearable and useful: 1 Cor. x. 13.

“III. *Confidence in the divine care*: His care is his people’s comfort. His eyes are ever on the justified in Christ, and his ears are open to their prayers. He enjoins us to call on him in a day of trouble, and promises us deliverance. Confidence in God stays and upholds the mind in an hour of tribulation. He engages his ability and kindness on our side. All good is promised to them that trust in him. What he *prevents not*, he prepares his saints *to endure*; and what we have, with interest in his love and in the death of Christ, will not harm us in the end, though it try us for a season.

“IV. *Reliance on the divine arm*: He engages to uphold us himself. ‘Fear not, for I am with thee; be not dismayed, for I am thy God; I will strengthen thee, yea, I will help thee,’ &c.: Isa. xli. 10. His love moves his arm, and extends its influence thereby; but what can we fear from his love? Whom he loves he corrects and forgives, but he never leaves them. He hides his love at seasons, but never denies it, nor acts contrary to it. And as his arm is the power of his love, we may well rely upon it.

"V. *Constant attention to the throne of grace, and to the Scriptures*, is another ground of encouragement in a trying hour. Wrestling with God is strengthening ourselves; by holding fast by his ability, we overcome our own weakness. Spend a little time frequently at the mercy-seat, and be careful to acknowledge the favours you obtain. 'Men ought always to pray and not to faint,' said our Lord. Praying always, was one of Paul's maxims. It cannot be persisted in in vain.

"VI. *Expectation of eternal life*, is a mighty help in this valley of death: Heb. xiii. 14. The Hebrews suffered joyfully, 'knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' 'Looking for the blessed hope' renders present griefs more easy to bear. Expect the help promised you. Remember your mercies. Watch against useless grief. Pray in your tears, and aim to make your fits of sorrow helps to your devotional exercises.

"I long to hear from you, and how you view things now, whether you have concluded on removing, how you fared on Lord's-day, whether the friends continue kind to you, how poor John is, and the dear girls. I feel as if I should like to come to Willingham, if the Lord will, to carry on the cause my dear son had set his hand to. But the Lord will, I hope, direct me. Give my love to all the friends that may call. I hope my dear J. got safe at last; give my love to her; we are well as usual. . . . All join in sympathy, but especially

Your affectionate Father,
J. STEVENS.

'Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid.'

While thus called to endure the affliction incident to so painful a bereavement, his mind continued actively engaged in varied and abundant labours in the Redeemer's cause.

In the year 1830, he published the substance of several discourses he had delivered on the "*sinlessness of Jesus*," from the words of the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 21: "*He knew no sin*." This production was occasioned by the publication of the Rev. Edward Irving's heterodox and pernicious sentiments on the *humanity of Christ*—the radical and essential sinfulness of which, that gentleman had laboured to establish, producing a considerable excitement among the churches, and beguiling many unstable minds from the purity of the faith. At the earnest solicitation of his own church, Mr. Stevens came forth in vindication of the honour of his Lord, and most ably and successfully repelled the *offensive doctrine*, which averred the human nature of the Holy Redeemer to be *possessed of all the sinful properties and inclinations of fallen sinners*; a sentiment, the blasphemous nature and tendency of which, can scarcely be exceeded! The following statements of Mr. Irving on the subject, will present the reader with a summary view of the

heresy of that extraordinary man. "Christ," he says, "was *inclined* to all those things which the law interdicted." "God sent his Son in flesh *not* without sin." "There was in him *the will of the flesh*, which, *in itself*, is contrary to the will of the Father." "His flesh was *devil-possessed*; and it remained without any alteration, anterior to his resurrection. *Every variety of human wickedness was inherent in his humanity*." "He took sinful flesh—a *flesh full of sin*." "He came into manhood—brought into a state of *resistance to and alienation from God*—of *proclivity to evil*—of *subjection to the devil*."

From the words of the apostle, selected by Mr. Stevens, and upon which he founded his refutation of the above wicked assertions, he shows that the perfect holiness of Jesus comprises the *radical sinlessness* of his human nature, as well as the *active righteousness* of his character and life; that the *utter absence* of all *propensity* to, or *contamination* of moral evil, was essential to his rectitude and conformity to the divine law;—that his absolute purity of nature was necessary to qualify him for the work of salvation; and that the universal testimony of the scriptures concerning him, establishes the impeccability of his character.

The perfect sinlessness of our Lord is further argued from the fact, that "*He was personally above Adam, in the order of dignity, of sonship, and of place*." Consequently, it is shown that he could not possibly derive from a fallen head of mankind, even the sinful properties and propensities of a fallen nature. Being above Adam, it is contended that sin could not ascend to affect him, from one whose order of existence was below him. The existence of our Lord before Adam, indefinitely in the order of time, is shown to demonstrate the impossibility of his deriving any contamination from the source of universal evil among men; for if Adam did not come into existence until after the Lord Jesus Christ, he could not contaminate him; and there being no sin among mankind but what originated in Adam, the conclusion is inevitable, that the human nature of Jesus was perfectly holy.

"In attempting to advocate the cause of Jesus Christ," Mr. S. says, "it is needful to observe, that his moral character was safe while he was with the Father in his ancient glory; and especially to mark, in following him downward from his excellent glory, that he never lost his *sinless* character in or after his descent. It is pleasing to see that

in purifying his church, he never defiled himself; in bettering his brethren's character, he never endangered his own. Nothing like transgression of the law, which is the true definition of sin, was ever chargeable upon him by nature or practice. He was sinless, holy, just, and good."

This part of Mr. Stevens's argument, is based upon the primeval existence and glory of the "Man Christ Jesus," who, as the Son of God, the Father of everlasting ages, stood higher in the order of *time* than Adam, our natural father did.

"Now," observes our author, "from this priority, it is pleaded that his soul could not be defiled from the fall of Adam, seeing it was in existence above and before the Eden lapse; so that it could no more be affected by it, than your father can be affected by the sin you commit fifty years after his death. Your sinful acts cannot deprave your ancestors, who lived generations before you:" p. 22.

The distinction of our Lord's headship from the headship of Adam, is also adduced as an incontrovertible proof of the essential sinlessness of his character. Sin was derived to mankind from an *earthly* head, and, through him, it came into this world; but it is affirmed that Christ was not comprehended in that Eden establishment. The argument, Mr. Stevens presents in the following clear and forcible manner:—

"Adam was not the head of Christ; he did not represent him, nor was he considered as a person in him. His personality does not stand in the *human* nature, but in the divine; it is not manifested in the divine nature, but in the human; what constitutes personality, and that which manifests it, ought to be carefully distinguished. . . . Adam could only contaminate those who were involved in his headship; but he was not the head of Christ, as before observed; therefore his fall could not affect him. Christ did not take his soul from Adam; and his taking flesh could not fasten any blot upon his complex person. A drop of ink falling on a red hot globe could not fix a spot of blackness, neither could sin gain an existence in the God-possessed humanity of our most holy Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ. He could become weak, but he could not become wicked: he could take sin *on* himself, in concurrence with his Father's will, but he could not take it to be *in* him. He could not disregard his own personal character, in acting with a view to maintain the honour of the Deity, and the holiness of all the ways of divine sovereignty towards fallen man. Now, as Adam could only defile *persons*, and not *things*, and Christ was not a human person, nor comprehended in Adam's covenant, but was above him, and constituted holy before him; so, this priority of our Lord, this pre-eminence in the order of dignity, sonship, and place; his being indefinitely before him in *the order of time*, and separate from

him in *the order of headship*, all conspire to prove that our adorable Saviour could not become sinful through Adam, who yet was the root of all the sinfulness of mankind : " p. 23.

This subject, which so intimately concerns the personal honour of the Redeemer, is next viewed in relation to his miraculous conception and birth, wherein it is shown that "the holy body of our Lord was, in different respects, both of the Holy Spirit, and of the Virgin ; of her *substantially*, and of him *formatively*." Therefore as he was the only *active agent* in the formation of the infantile frame, and as he could produce nothing that was *sinful*, the sinlessness of our Saviour's body is thence inferred, and by a variety of arguments established.

Mr. Stevens concludes this laboured defence of the spotless purity of our Lord's human nature, by adducing the ample testimony of divine revelation, and by exhibiting the necessity thereof, in order to the effectual redemption and salvation of his beloved church.

The latter part of the work consists of animadversions on Mr. Irving's doctrine concerning the point in dispute, wherein the discordant and contradictory assertions of that extraordinary writer are exposed—the *grounds* of his erring from the truth are pointed out—and his unscriptural representations of the Godhead are reviewed and confuted.

Mr. Irving's grand error appears to have consisted in the belief, that Christ's assumption of human nature involved the derivation and possession of its *sinful* qualities, and that this was *necessary* to exhibit and manifest the Redeemer's power to withstand and *overcome* the inherent evils of human nature, which, in himself, he avers was "sinful," "devil-possessed," and contained "every variety of human wickedness ;"—that "he was put into the condition of a *fallen* creature ;" in which fallen nature, he established the righteousness of the law, by an *active and effectual* opposition to all the evil and rebellion of the flesh, and thus saved his people ! Indeed, the main scope of his argument is, that Christ must have been full of sin, or he could not have effectually saved his church ! For the honour of the Redeemer's character, no man ever felt a holier jealousy than Mr. Stevens, and while his ample refutation of the above Christ-dishonouring tenets, is characterized by a righteous indignancy of feeling, it is pleasing to observe the author refraining from all *personal* reflections on his opponent,

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whose reputed amiable and excellent character justly commanded esteem, though they rendered his egregious errors the more deeply to be regretted, and the more necessary to be exposed and refuted.

In the year 1833, Mr. Stevens presented to the church of Christ another publication on the doctrine of the pre-existent humanity of Jesus Christ; which was occasioned by a pamphlet of a most malevolent character, issued by Mr. F. Silver, wherein the writings of Mr. Stevens were maliciously mis-represented, and the Pre-existerians were malignantly defamed and persecuted.

Mr. Stevens's reply to this most unchristian and vindictive publication is intituled, "*CELESTIAL FILIATION; being a Vindication of the Pre-existence of the Lord Jesus Christ; in which the erroneous assertions and false imputations of Mr. Silver, in his late pamphlet, are exposed and refuted.*"

Hitherto his opponents on this subject had been men of integrity, candour, and courteous behaviour, evincing a fraternal spirit, and commanding esteem, by the purity of their motives, and the uprightness of their conduct. But Mr. Silver was evidently a man of another cast, and his defamatory book would, perhaps, have remained unanswered, but for the eulogium it received from the pen of the reviewer, in the *Spiritual Magazine*; which described the performance as being "a superior little book, the author of which displayed more than ordinary critical acumen," &c. Mr. Stevens has, however, fairly tested the "critical acumen" of its author, while the malevolent spirit breathed throughout the whole production meets with that exposure and reprehension it justly deserves. Mr. Silver evidently sought to traduce the character of the Pre-existerians, while he vainly endeavoured to subvert their principles. In the plenitude of his wrath, he assumed the high prerogative of fixing their *eternal* destiny, as "*worshippers of an idol god*"—as "*antichrists*"—as "*worse than the devil*"—"false teachers"—"*acting with subtlety*"—"acting the part of Judas, who lie in wait to deceive"—"*preaching another Jesus*"—"their imaginations infamous"—"*their God being their idol,*" and *they themselves* "*really dead before God.*"

It must be confessed that such splenetic effusions as the above are beneath contempt, and while such a spirit governed the mind of the writer, it could be scarcely hoped that the most demonstrative arguments would produce

any effect; either to rectify his judgment, or soften his asperity.

Mr. Stevens's reply is, however, an admirable defence of the doctrine for which it pleads; it is written with great ability, and contains an ample refutation of the sophistical arguments and calumnious assertions of Mr. Silver.

In 1835, another opponent made his appearance, and entered the field of controversy, on the same subject, against Mr. Stevens. *Mr. W. H. Collyer, of Fooks' Cray*, after having, it seems, long pre-meditated an attack upon the "Goliath" of modern Pre-existerians, addressed to Mr. Stevens a letter, intituled, "*Reasons for rejecting the Hypothesis of the Pre-existence of the Human Soul of Christ.*" This was announced by its author, as the *first* of a series of letters intended to be published at his "earliest leisure;" but it is presumed that the *mortification* occasioned by the result of the first onset, induced him to relinquish his design. To Mr. Collyer's publication, Mr. Stevens replied in "*A Defensive Letter,*" addressed to his new adversary, intituled, "*Early Sonship; or, Christ before all things.*" One of the main arguments employed by Mr. C. to demolish "the hypothesis" of Christ's pre-existence, was the *inconsistencies* of some of its advocates, by which also he aimed to invalidate the writings of Mr. Stevens on the subject, and to subvert those principles on which Mr. S. had founded his arguments. Of this mode of reasoning Mr. Stevens justly complains; and reminds his opponent that the discrepancies of Dr. Watts, Mr. Hussey, and others, may be fully admitted, without the sentiment being at all affected thereby; "and," he adds, "*as to my having contradicted myself in the doctrine of our Lord's early existence, so as to deny the fact itself, to me it is not evident, nor have you proved any thing of the kind.*"

This, in fact, Mr. Collyer had laboured to prove, and for the purpose of doing so, he had not rested his arguments on Mr. Stevens's accredited writings on the subject; but in his researches for evidence of his inconsistency, had gone back twenty-seven years, and from some numbers of the old Gospel Magazine, had collected certain statements of an anonymous pre-existerian writer, whom he at once concluded to be Mr. Stevens himself:—*there could be no doubt of it, for he had been INFORMED of it "by some friends who stated the quotations were the production of Mr. Stevens's*

pen." Guided by such information, Mr. C. adduces the statements above alluded to, as demonstrative proofs of Mr. Stevens's self-contradictions, rears the whole fabric of his argument on the assumed truthfulness of the charge, and, in a prolix epistle of upwards of a hundred pages, vaunts his triumph over the "Modern Goliath," the "Living Lion" of the pre-existerian tribe!

But unfortunately for Mr. Collyer, Mr. Stevens declares himself *not* to be the writer of the pieces in the Gospel Magazine,—that at the time of their being written he had *not become a pre-existerian*—and that the author of the articles from which the numerous quotations in Mr. Collyer's letter were selected in proof of Mr. Stevens's inconsistencies, were written by S. Barnard, Esq., of Boston. The discovery of this mistake induced Mr. Collyer to call in the letter he had published; but instead of *suppressing* it altogether, as a tissue of misrepresentations calculated to degrade Mr. Stevens in the eyes of the public, he appended an insulting POSTSCRIPT, and without any further alteration, or qualification of the false allegations *he now knew it to contain*, he published it to the world as containing his "reasons for rejecting the hypothesis of the pre-existence of the human soul of Christ."

Such conduct *deserved* severe reprehension, and Mr. Stevens not only, in brief, replies to the objections urged against the pre-existerian "hypothesis," but inflicts a richly merited castigation on the author of so uncandid and unchristian a publication; not however, we think, without an occasional *warmth* of expression that was calculated to irritate, rather than convince or conciliate his opponent.

"Adding a *postscript*," says Mr. Stevens, "where a *prescript* would have been more fair and honest, amply shows your designing soul. You commence your quotations at the fourth page, and the reader has no plain warning of their unfairness until he arrives at the end of 109 pages! This may appear to you good scheming, but honest men must, on seeing it, at once condemn your artifice. I had always imagined you to be a very different man to what your measures represent you to be. I will, however, endeavour to profit, even by that which is evidently intended for my hurt. It would not be prudent on my part to write a long letter, as you have promised a series of letters in opposition to the ancient glory of the Son of God. It will be right for me to be on the look out, and to watch your manœuvres, as they become evident. I now begin to know my man a little, and to discover his temper. It will be my chief aim to defend what is valuable pertaining to my royal Master. You, I perceive, are a man of many unnecessary

words; you shall scatter them to the winds as you please. If you continue to abuse some of the King's messengers who have been promoted to the upper part of the city, as I know it cannot affect them, I shall do little to interrupt you in your pleasing employment. I must, by consequence, expect to hear you rave out against the antiquity of my Sovereign: even this, while it proceeds as it has done, in mere assertion, and in the logic of an angry woman, saying, 'It is not so, because it is not so, and I can prove it, for I am sure it cannot be so,' and the like, it will give me no very great concern. But should any attempt be made on the arsenal and the armoury, I shall feel myself called upon to exert my little strength and skill, and to call upon the King himself at the same juncture, for all suitable aid in the contest."

It is pleasant to retire from the arena of controversial discussion, and to take a view of the man of God, as employed in those pastoral and pacific labours, which exhibit in bold relief the lovelier features of a great and holy mind. In his ministerial connection and pursuits, Mr. Stevens continued to enjoy a great measure of success and encouragement. Surrounded by an affectionate and prosperous church, who appreciated the great truths held forth in his ministry, and "esteemed him very highly in love for his work's sake," he was favoured to behold in Salem's courts the predicted restoration and glory of Zion:—"Thou shalt no more be termed Forsaken, neither shall thy land any more be termed Desolate; but thou shalt be called Hepzibah, and thy land Beulah; for the Lord delighteth in thee, and thy land shall be married."

In his labours among his people, his whole heart was engaged, and their spiritual edification and establishment in the faith of God's elect, was an object of his unwearied solicitude. The promotion of their joy of faith in a spiritual understanding of the sublime verities of the gospel of God, was evidently his aim in the ministrations of the sanctuary, and in the much-loved retirement of the study. For them he lived and laboured, and any employment that could not be rendered subservient to their highest interests, was regarded by him as useless and vain.

It has been already seen that the exercises of his mind were of a varied character, and that alternating feelings of joy and depression attended him in the prosecution of his labours. This appears also to have been the case during those successful and prosperous periods of his ministry, in which the hand of the Lord was so evidently with him, in the mighty power and gracious effects of his preaching. It

is hoped that a few additional extracts from his journal may not be unacceptable to the reader, as confirmatory of the above remark, and as indicating the maintenance of an habitual communion with God and his own heart, in all his labours of love.

"May 5, 1827.—Had a most trying time in my mind before I read my text, which I twice changed, and at last fixed on Revelations i. 5, 6, after I had been in prayer in the pulpit. I spoke with fluency and pleasure to myself, I hope also with profit to the people. Evening.—I read 1 Corinthians i. 9; had a good deal of help, though my subject, in the latter part especially, was not well arranged."

"December 5.—A free opportunity on Ephesians v. 1, 2. Blessed be the Lord for ever! His kindness to me is often great in my work, and when he leaves me, he still loves me. Mr. and Mrs. C. were present; but the privilege to us all was, Jesus Christ was there!"

"Lord's-day, December 9.—I selected 1 John iv. 17, and Romans i. 17. My services were but imperfect ones. I am glad, and wish to be more grateful that the safety of my soul is in Christ's services."

"August 31, 1828.—A truly pleasant time on 1 Peter iv. 6. Evening—Isaiah xliii. 1, 3. A moderate time, but on the whole, I have reason to be thankful that I have not been silenced before the people. God is merciful."

"October 2.—At the opening of ———. Had a good season, blessed be the Lord for it. He is merciful to a *poor sorrowful worm*. I read Genesis xxvi. 17."

"December 21.—I think the most trying day I have had for a long time, especially in the morning, on James ii. 5. Evening.—After abandoning my subject the second time, I read 1 Peter ii. 7. What I suffered in my work, and after it, is not easily expressed. I hope for the returns of the Holy Spirit, and a revival of *my own spirit*."

"Lord's-day, December 28.—O my soul, how tried hast thou been! What a distressing day! Both the subjects studied taken from thee. O my Lord, my Saviour, have pity on me, and return, return speedily to thy servant! Let me not utterly faint. Let thy sorrowful servant retire to his pillow in hope: restore my joys, and save my distressed soul, I pray."

"December 30.—I felt some sweet sense of the Lord's presence on my mind, in a few remarks at the church-meeting, and in prayer. We received Brother ———; *I hope another seal to my feeble ministry*."

"December 31.—I read Romans xiii. 11, first part; was bound again in spirit, though some good things were said. Without Christ I can do nothing."

"January 5, 1829.—The Lord was with me, I trust, in my remarks, and I hope to see him again, and to praise his name."

"January 18.—A blessed morning on 1 Corinthians vi. 19, 20. A sad evening on the 17th verse of the same chapter. The Lord doeth as it hath pleased him; let his name be magnified, though mine be forgotten."

"February 4.—A sorely confined season on the first part of Acts viii. 33. Lord, what a helpless, useless, forlorn thing I am, if left of thee!"

"March 11.—This was a delightful time on Ephesians ii. 14, first part. O how sweet the work when the Lord is there! May my labours be blessed."

"April 8.—I read Philippians i. 11. A most heavy time. O the sorrow of preaching without the Holy Spirit!"

"May 9.—At ———. I read Hebrews ix. 28, first part. A good time, blessed be my Lord. How valuable the offering of Christ? Alas! I can never love him enough for his meritorious services."

"November 15.—Read Isaiah liii. 5, last part. Had a tolerable season. Evening.—Jeremiah xxxi. 2. A wretched time. O how poor a thing I am without the Lord!"

"December 13.—Rev. iii. 5. A dull, prolix opportunity. I cannot work alone without great difficulty."

"July 6, 1830. James i. 1, 2. At ——— anniversary. The most distressing time I have had for a long season, if not ever. But the Lord has full right to do with me as he will. It is my mercy that I have better times."

"November 6.—A most distressing time, nor could I perceive one beam of cheering light through the whole evening. *I baptized nine persons.* O Lord, leave me not; return, return, thou sacred Dove divine to my distressed soul. O my God, forgive and bless thy servant."

"January 30, 1831.—John vii. 11. 'Where is he?' A blessed season. God be praised."

"March 3.—Isaiah xlvi. 13. A most burdened and confined time as I ever felt. O my soul, how helpless, how wretched, how grieved art thou, when thus left! In what is wrong, forgive thy servant, O Lord!"

"July 7.—A sweet and easy time on Rom. viii. 9. How sweet was the grace after the pain of the former evening. Glory be to God."

"July 17.—1 Cor. iv. 20. Was much dissatisfied with myself, and very sorrowful after preaching; but it is my mercy God does not silence me before the people."

"October 9.—Heb. ix. 16, 17. A more painful time I have seldom if ever known. But God is just; I am a sinful man. In the evening, I was a little better; indeed I spoke with much freedom, considering the distress of my mind before service. Lord, forgive and help thy dispirited servant, and do bless my most imperfect services. Amen."

It is regretted that during the latter part of his life, the remarks recorded in his journal are found to be less frequent and copious, than in previous years. The insertion of his texts, however, appears to have been regularly attended, to which is commonly added some ejaculatory expression of devotional feeling, indicating the frame of his mind, and the degree of liberty enjoyed in the Lord's service; such for instance, as the following:—"A trying time, the Lord be revered."—"A good day, blessed be God."—"Rather tried, but not forsaken."—"A blessed time, all praise to our God."—"A sad helpless time, but I am a sinner, his will

be done."—"A good time, praise the Lord; but very flat at the table, how helpless am I!"—"A moderate time, but God is merciful." "An extraordinary time, thanks to the Lord."

On the recurrence of his *birth-day*, he was accustomed more fully to record the feelings of his mind, in reviewing the past, and anticipating the future. The following reflections on several of those occasions, are transcribed with a more especial view, (as, indeed, are *all* the extracts from his journal,) to the interested feeling with which *his own bereaved church* will be likely to regard those precious memorials of their deceased pastor's private devotional exercises.

"June 8, 1832.—This day I have been fifty-six years in this sinful world. I have been the subject of serious thoughts and desires more than forty years; was baptized by Mr. Burnham in a small chapel in Edward Street, Soho, about thirty-seven years since. I have been in the ministry about thirty-six years. Have been chosen pastor over three different churches. Have had many more mercies than miseries. The Lord has helped me hitherto. May his loving-kindness remain to the end, through the merit of Jesus. My life and labours be useful to his church and people, and my latter end be peace. All the glory shall be his for ever!"

"June 8, 1835.—I am this day fifty-nine years of age. Mercies still follow me, and my life is hid with Christ in God. I find my memory begins to stagger, and it is my desire to take warning. Lord, help me to spend my few remaining days more directly to thy praise. Help me to live more near to thee; more prayerfully, and more thankfully. More heavenly, and more joyful in thee may I live, till my life of faith shall run into a life of glad vision and praise. O Lord Jesus, endear thyself more to thy unworthy servant, and perfect thy strength in his weakness, and bring him to thy glory."

"June 8, 1836.—This morning I am sixty years of age. I had intended to spend this day to myself in private devotion, but have been utterly disappointed, by grievous pain in my head, and by persons calling; so that, to my sorrow, the whole day has passed in a useless manner. O my merciful Lord, pity and pardon thy servant in his faults and sufferings, and the hindrances he experiences. O give me grace to spend my few remaining days more to thy praise, and the benefit of thy church. Crown my last days with thy abundant favour, and prepare me for that holy world which thou hast promised to thy people. Accept my hearty thanks for thy multiplied mercies, continued to this advanced period of my pilgrimage."

"June 8, 1837.—On this day I have arrived at the age of sixty-one. Goodness and mercy have crowned my days. The past year has been favoured with peace in the church, and with increase. Lord, pardon thy servant's faults; endow him with gifts and grace to go in and out before the people acceptably, and render his few remaining days serene and prosperous."

"June 8, 1838.—I am spared to see another birth-day. Mercy has continued to follow me hitherto. Peace in the church is still preserved, and we continue to see a few coming into our fellowship. Lord, help thy feeble servant, hide his faults, plead his cause, preserve his conscience, his character, his health, his friends, to the last. Render him useful in life, happy in, and after death; and the glory, O Lord, my God, shall be thine for ever."

"June 8, 1842.—This day I am sixty-six years of age, and goodness and mercy have followed me all the days of my life. My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my hope is fixed in God, my Saviour. I experience great weakness of body to what I ever knew before, especially in my power of breathing, having been afflicted greatly with the influenza from almost the beginning of the year. My sin is my enemy, and my plague, and my shame. Glory be to God for Jesus Christ,—for the Holy Spirit,—for faith, hope, and love. Lord, help thy servant to live more to thy glory, and render the few days that remain a blessing to thy church and people."

Such were the reflections and aspirations of the beloved Stevens, in the hallowed sanctuary of his retirement, while his increasing years and physical infirmities, silently premonished him of his approaching change.

His ministerial services, however, were at present but little interrupted by bodily indisposition; and, it is a pleasing reflection, that the period at which we have just hastily glanced was one of general harmony and joy within the walls of Salem.

Circumstances of a painful nature occasionally occurred, which reminded both pastor and people that *this was not their rest*; but peace was within their walls, and prosperity within their palaces, while the distinguished favour conferred on the ancient Father of the faithful, was in great measure enjoyed by them, in the frequent and gracious visits of Salem's King, the ever living Priest of the most High God.

The following letter addressed to some of his beloved friends at Boston, is expressive of Mr. Stevens's grateful feelings under the auspicious circumstances referred to above:

"To Mr. and Mrs. H.

"Dec. 11th, 1836.

"My esteemed Friends,—I herewith send six hymn-books for Mr. M., and one for *you*, which I hope you will accept as a small token of my abiding sense of your many expressions of kindness towards me. I am through great mercy at this time in health, though I have been otherwise since I saw you. I am also thankful to say that my

church connexion is in prosperity and in peace at present. We had our half-yearly meeting last Lord's-day afternoon, and I find our number has risen to 408. This is many more than in any former period, and for a strict-communion baptized church, is comparatively large. Thus has the Lord favoured me in the presence of my enemies, and caused some of the worst of them to return and seek their bread through my labours. I have long had my eye upon the last verse of the 86th Psalm, and thought that some time before I left the world he would grant me that petition, in his great mercy, that I might praise and bless his name. The day has now arrived; may my humility increase with my prosperity, and mine eye be ever kept single to his glory, whose I am by a great ransom, and whom I desire to serve with all fidelity to my latest hour. I hope the good Spirit of Jehovah will assist you both, by his heart-warming influence, to live close to the throne of heaven, to be frequent in converse with God, and to set the Lord Jesus always before you, and to help each other by prayer and converse on divine things.

"Study well 1 Cor. i. 30; and amidst all the various reports that may sound in your ears, never forget it, that other foundation cannot be laid than that which is already laid, (1 Cor. iii. 11.) And be content that the same foundation shall mark the dimension of the building, and account for its firm standing. Take heed to build on this "living stone" in all your worship and in all your wants. Whatever tends to lessen or hide the personal or mediatorial character of Jesus Christ, you may be sure it is unworthy of your esteem.

"Be so kind as to express my kind regards to Mr. V., Mrs. V., and to Mr. B., and any other friends that may value such testimonial. It might be that you would write to me, but I think it is not likely. If you *will not* write, you *may* pray for me, as I hope to remember you among my friends in Jesus in divers places.

"I have not time to add more, than that I remain, sincerely

"Your friend in Jesus,

"JOHN STEVENS."

While pursuing, with unremitting assiduity, his labours of love among the people of his charge, his services were much in requisition on public occasions—at anniversaries, ordinations, and the opening of chapels in various places, both in town and country, wherever the truths he proclaimed were appreciated and loved. And the number of those churches which, adhering to the great principles of divine truth, gave him a cordial reception, and highly prized his ministerial services, were by no means inconsiderable. If some of his theological tenets were not in *exact* accordance with the views of brethren and churches, with whom he was connected in those public services, such partial differences of opinion were not erected as barriers to his efficient aid and assistance; nor did he permit such considerations to impede his usefulness in the cause of God

and truth. His able ministrations—the power, the intellectual greatness and divine savour that frequently characterized his discourses, both among his own people, and on more public occasions, will long be remembered by many who highly valued him as an honest advocate, and able defender of the gospel of the grace of God. What may be termed his *occasional* ministrations, had become, many years since, very frequent and extensive. In the year 1823, he first preached at the anniversary at TRING, HERTS, in the room of the late Mr. John Keeble, of Blandford Street, who died soon after; and for twenty-three successive years, (with one exception only) he was one of the preachers at that anniversary. During the summer months, he was accustomed for many years to preach at upwards of *twenty* anniversary meetings in London, and different parts of the country, besides his frequent engagements on other public occasions. In his annual tour through the counties of Lincoln, Huntingdon, and Cambridge, he was fully employed among his numerous and esteemed friends, in preaching the gospel of free and distinguishing grace. His visits were ever regarded as subordinate to the fulfilment of his ministry, of which he gave “full proof,” as well by the assiduous diligence, as the uncompromising faithfulness of his labours in the gospel.

These public and numerous engagements very naturally brought him into connection with many of his brethren in the ministry, with whom, as faithful and honest men, he felt it to be an honour to be associated in the cause of his divine Master. His intercourse, however, with other ministers was very limited, which was chiefly owing to the sedentary habits he had acquired, and to a peculiarly reserved temperament, which perhaps frequently restrained that freedom of communication, in which he was wont to indulge with those who were favoured with his more intimate friendship. A knowledge of others, and a conviction of their sincerity and honesty of heart, seemed necessary to relax the somewhat rigid features of his mind, and to render him easy of access, and familiar in conversational intercourse. It was no inconsiderable gratification to Mr. Stevens, that there were men of God—able ministers of the New Testament—who were firm in their attachment to the truth of God, and with whom he could, and did for many years unite in promoting the interest of the Redeemer's kingdom;

while with *some* of them, it was his happiness to enjoy an intimate and a lasting friendship.

But with men whose doctrinal sentiments were subversive of the grand peculiarities of gospel truth, or the *sincerity* of whose professed adherence to the principles of distinguishing grace was rendered doubtful by the artifices to which many resort, he could not cordially unite, nor feel at liberty to compromise his principles, by affecting an obsequiously charitable regard, that rejoiceth in aught but the truth.

It was, however, not without evident regret on the part of Mr. Stevens, that the prevailing errors of the Baptist body prevented his employing his influence, in aid of its denominational institutions. His views of the claims of consistency, and a deep concern for the declining cause of truth, had induced him to stand aloof from those whom he considered the chief abettors of arminianized systems of doctrine.

Yet he firmly believed that the operations of the Foreign Baptist Missionary Society, and other kindred institutions, were means which the Lord had blessed with a measure of *real* success. The translation of the sacred Scriptures into the languages of the idolatrous world, he ever regarded as a noble and holy aggression upon the kingdom of darkness. The formation of the *Bible Translation Society*, some few years since, received his hearty concurrence and support. Nor did he at all object to the *principle* of christian missions, or doubt the beneficial results of foreign exertions, to some extent, in connection with our denominational society. He felt convinced that, amidst all the error and folly, extravagance and wildness, that were identified with those men and their measures, that the glad tidings of redeeming mercy were proclaimed among the heathen, by at least *some* of the agents employed, and that the *truth thus preached*, had "become mighty through God, to the pulling down of strong-holds." While, therefore, the multitude were engaged in removing "the ancient landmarks"—in undermining the apostolic foundation of all successful missionary enterprise—in marking the boundaries of salvation by the measuring line of human agency—in calculating the *effectual* triumphs of redeeming grace by arithmetical proportions of men and money—and in amusing themselves with their favourite scheme of universal evangelization; he believed

that God was fulfilling the purposes of his grace, and that his blessing was not withheld from *his own truth*, notwithstanding the deteriorating influence of surreptitious and specious errors, which are evidently impairing the whole machinery of missionary effort, and effectually obscure the glory of sovereign and distinguishing grace. Such being the views Mr. Stevens entertained of the character of those societies, his mind, it is believed, was not a little exercised, especially during the latter part of his life, respecting the obligatory claims of the missionary cause. On the one hand, his uncompromising hostility to the erroneous sentiments gaining ascendancy in our public institutions, seemed to preclude a cordial and conscientious co-operation in promoting their legitimate objects; and on the other, a deep conviction of the obligatory nature of the divine commission to "*Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*," was evidently felt by him as demanding the exercise of personal influence, energy, and zeal, in a cause that bears so evidently the stamp of divine authority.

To his views and feelings on this subject, he is remembered to have given expression at a public tea meeting, held in his own chapel, in aid of the cause of foreign missions, a few years since. In his address on that occasion, Mr. Stevens remarked:—

"After the lapse of many years, the visit of a good man has tended to rouse us dull-headed things. Much has often been urged, that in those who advocate the cause of missions, there is much error and folly; but if we stand still till everything can be done exactly right, death will come to prevent us doing anything, and here I am quite unhorsed! But now with the word of God, we have full directions:—success has attended their efforts—now what have we to do? I have been sluggish all my life—I have walked apart, and thought myself excused, and now I have come to this; that the principles of truth are to be maintained, but (let us ask) what we can do in the cause of Christ, without sacrificing our sentiments? It is very desirable to obtain scriptural knowledge of what is our duty. Can we benefit our brother by merely keeping our own views? I view the world as a field, out of which sovereignty is gleaning out its people. Still the means are to be used—the mission goes to all in the doctrine, and the word drops where God orders it. Ask the missionary, does entire success attend thy labours? he answers, no! do all believe? he says, no! Were I a missionary to-morrow, I should not preach to the heathen as I do to you, my friends, but should aim to crumble down my crust so that the humblest child might eat, but I would not sacrifice my principles. I should pick up a poor heathen where I found him, and endeavour to show him his sinfulness, and the love of a Saviour! I must hold my views,

"V. *Constant attention to the throne of grace, and to the Scriptures*, is another ground of encouragement in a trying hour. Wrestling with God is strengthening ourselves; by holding fast by his ability, we overcome our own weakness. Spend a little time frequently at the mercy-seat, and be careful to acknowledge the favours you obtain. 'Men ought always to pray and not to faint,' said our Lord. Praying always, was one of Paul's maxims. It cannot be persisted in in vain.

"VI. *Expectation of eternal life*, is a mighty help in this valley of death: Heb. xiii. 14. The Hebrews suffered joyfully, 'knowing in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance.' 'Looking for the blessed hope' renders present griefs more easy to bear. Expect the help promised you. Remember your mercies. Watch against useless grief. Pray in your tears, and aim to make your fits of sorrow helps to your devotional exercises.

"I long to hear from you, and how you view things now, whether you have concluded on removing, how you fared on Lord's-day, whether the friends continue kind to you, how poor John is, and the dear girls. I feel as if I should like to come to Willingham, if the Lord will, to carry on the cause my dear son had set his hand to. But the Lord will, I hope, direct me. Give my love to all the friends that may call. I hope my dear J. got safe at last; give my love to her; we are well as usual. . . . All join in sympathy, but especially

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While thus called to endure the affliction incident to so painful a bereavement, his mind continued actively engaged in varied and abundant labours in the Redeemer's cause.

In the year 1830, he published the substance of several discourses he had delivered on the "*sinlessness of Jesus*," from the words of the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 21: "*He knew no sin*." This production was occasioned by the publication of the Rev. Edward Irving's heterodox and pernicious sentiments on the *humanity of Christ*—the radical and essential sinfulness of which, that gentleman had laboured to establish, producing a considerable excitement among the churches, and beguiling many unstable minds from the purity of the faith. At the earnest solicitation of his own church, Mr. Stevens came forth in vindication of the honour of his Lord, and most ably and successfully repelled the *offensive* doctrine, which averred the human nature of the Holy Redeemer to be *possessed of all the sinful properties and inclinations of fallen sinners*; a sentiment, the blasphemous nature and tendency of which, can scarcely be exceeded! The following statements of Mr. Irving on the subject, will present the reader with a summary view of the

heresy of that extraordinary man. "Christ," he says, "was *inclined* to all those things which the law interdicted." "God sent his Son in flesh *not* without sin." "There was in him *the will of the flesh*, which, *in itself*, is contrary to the will of the Father." "His flesh was *devil-possessed*; and it remained without any alteration, anterior to his resurrection. *Every variety of human wickedness was inherent in his humanity*." "He took sinful flesh—a *flesh full of sin*." "He came into manhood—brought into a state of *resistance to and alienation from God*—of *proclivity to evil*—of *subjection to the devil*."

From the words of the apostle, selected by Mr. Stevens, and upon which he founded his refutation of the above wicked assertions, he shows that the perfect holiness of Jesus comprises the *radical sinlessness* of his human nature, as well as the *active righteousness* of his character and life; that the *utter absence* of all *propensity* to, or *contamination* of moral evil, was essential to his rectitude and conformity to the divine law;—that his absolute purity of nature was necessary to qualify him for the work of salvation; and that the universal testimony of the scriptures concerning him, establishes the impeccability of his character.

The perfect sinlessness of our Lord is further argued from the fact, that "*He was personally above Adam, in the order of dignity, of sonship, and of place*." Consequently, it is shown that he could not possibly derive from a fallen head of mankind, even the sinful properties and propensities of a fallen nature. Being above Adam, it is contended that sin could not ascend to affect him, from one whose order of existence was below him. The existence of our Lord before Adam, indefinitely in the order of time, is shown to demonstrate the impossibility of his deriving any contamination from the source of universal evil among men; for if Adam did not come into existence until after the Lord Jesus Christ, he could not contaminate him; and there being no sin among mankind but what originated in Adam, the conclusion is inevitable, that the human nature of Jesus was perfectly holy.

"In attempting to advocate the cause of Jesus Christ," Mr. S. says, "it is needful to observe, that his moral character was safe while he was with the Father in his ancient glory; and especially to mark, in following him downward from his excellent glory, that he never lost his sinless character in or after his descent. It is pleasing to see that

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'Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid.'

While thus called to endure the affliction incident to so painful a bereavement, his mind continued actively engaged in varied and abundant labours in the Redeemer's cause.

In the year 1830, he published the substance of several discourses he had delivered on the "*sinlessness of Jesus*," from the words of the apostle, 2 Cor. v. 21: "*He knew no sin.*" This production was occasioned by the publication of the Rev. Edward Irving's heterodox and pernicious sentiments on the *humanity of Christ*—the radical and essential sinfulness of which, that gentleman had laboured to establish, producing a considerable excitement among the churches, and beguiling many unstable minds from the purity of the faith. At the earnest solicitation of his own church, Mr. Stevens came forth in vindication of the honour of his Lord, and most ably and successfully repelled the *offensive* doctrine, which averred the human nature of the Holy Redeemer to be *possessed of all the sinful properties and inclinations of fallen sinners*; a sentiment, the blasphemous nature and tendency of which, can scarcely be exceeded! The following statements of Mr. Irving on the subject, will present the reader with a summary view of the

assistance. The "annotations" appended to many of the subjects are *excellent*; they contain the cream of the author's thoughts on the most important points of christian doctrine and practice.

As an author, Mr. Stevens has yielded an important service to that portion of the church of Christ, by whom the precious truths of sovereign and distinguishing grace are appreciated and loved. His works have obtained but a limited circulation, but they have proved a medium of instruction and establishment to very many, beside his own people, whose spiritual edification he chiefly had in view, in the generality of his writings. His controversial writings have excited much opposition from various parties, and repeated attempts have been vainly made to subvert the glorious truths for which he contended, and to attach discredit to himself and his productions.

Without, however, committing ourselves to the defence of *every* sentiment contained in his works, we venture to affirm that few polemical writers have wielded the "sword of the Spirit" more powerfully, or employed the strength of logical argument with greater skill and success, in the defence of the great truths of the gospel, than the author of "Help for the Disciples of Immanuel." His works amply discover his scriptural knowledge and penetration, and while some of his opponents could claim superior literary advantages, *he* harnessed himself at the divine armoury, and not unfrequently felt it to be rather an amusement than a labour, to demolish the arguments of an adversary. Of *some* of his opponents he was wont humorously to remark, "*I let them spin the cord with which I will presently tie their fingers.*" And in more than one instance did he thus effectually discomfit his assailant, and secure himself from further annoyances. In his controversial writings, however, TRUTH was the object for which he contended, and whatever degree of success may have attended his efforts, no one who had a *knowledge* of him can for a moment doubt the sincerity and ardency of his desire for the honour of the God of truth and holiness.

The studious habits which Mr. Stevens uniformly maintained, and the time he necessarily devoted to preparations for the pulpit and the press, afforded him but little opportunity for those recreative pursuits which to most ministers are, perhaps, equally useful and necessary. He made but

few visits, and even in his pastoral character his visits were less frequent and general than, perhaps, would have been conducive, as well to his own comfort, as the happiness of his people. It was a fixed maxim with him, that any employment of his time, otherwise than for the promotion of the cause of Jesus Christ, was mis-spent; and doubtless he knew by experience what many other ministers would do well also to consider, that frequent visits among a large circle of friends, very much encroach on the time which *ought* to be devoted to the word and work of God; and that social interviews too frequently degenerate into profitless pastimes and unedifying gossip! He had a strong antipathy to *large parties*, and whenever he united with his beloved people and friends at the social board, he did not feel happy, unless the conversation related to the things of God. Naturally of a reserved temperament, he [was] seldom forward to converse except there appeared a willingness to introduce some spiritual subject for general edification. An observation or a question addressed to him on any particular topic, would induce him to enter freely into conversation; and sometimes he would occupy half-an-hour in delivering his thoughts upon the subject introduced, in a most animated and edifying manner. Such seasons have been felt to be truly profitable, and the remembrance of many such social discourses from his lips is pleasurably cherished by a numerous circle of his friends, by whom his society was valued as a privilege of no ordinary character. Such a method of spending a social hour, however, may be open to objection; for if, through a consciousness of *another's* superiority, *he* is expected and urged almost exclusively to occupy the ear of the company assembled, the *social* character of the meeting is in a great measure obviated; and thus, through *fear* or a *spurious humility*, that free interchange of thought which is the characteristic of social intercourse, is suspended. This is an *evil*, and by none is it more *painfully felt* than by the individual who is thus honoured, in a manner that is unpleasant and repugnant to his own feelings, while he is deprived of the gratifying privilege that might otherwise be enjoyed in the free and unreserved communications of his friends.

Mr. Stevens's labours from the pulpit and the press were attended with great usefulness to many of the servants of the Lord Jesus Christ, whose steadfastness in the truth of

God he ever sought to promote, and in whose success in the work of the Lord he felt the highest pleasure. During the *entire* period of pastorate, upwards of *twenty* brethren were raised up under his ministry, and were sent forth by the church to preach the gospel; among whom the following ministers are now occupying stations of usefulness in the church of God:—Messrs. Row, of Gransden; Cattell, of Mepeel; Lucombe, late of City Road; Alderson, of Long Acre; Hawkins, of Shrewsbury; Collins, of Grundisburgh; Page, of Tring; Irish, of Warboys; Daniels, of Birmingham; Wyard, of Soho; Fish, of Great Gidding; Denham, Missionary to the East Indies; Potter, of Boston; Clarke, of Oundle; and Rust, of Colchester. Mr. Rust, however, was obliged, soon after his settlement, to relinquish his pastoral charge, through an affliction which incapacitates him for the regular work of the ministry.

The importance which Mr. Stevens justly attached to a faithful adherence to the great truths so generally rejected and despised in the present day, rendered him deeply solicitous for the constancy and firmness of the brethren who had risen up from his own flock, and gone forth to minister the word of life. His fatherly counsels and fervent prayers followed them into the fields of their labour, and *their* persevering attachment to the great principles they had professed was ever a source of real joy to him. But it was not his happiness, in every instance, to witness, in those who at first received the truth from his lips, that uncompromising fidelity and faithfulness to its interests, which he had hoped would distinguish and preserve them from the seductive influence of popular and flesh-pleasing sentiments. When he reflected on the instability of *some*, whose promising talents had induced him to regard them as the future able defenders of the truths he had laboured to maintain,—when he considered the inconstancy of those over whom he had watched, and whom he had *counselled and charged* with the faithfulness and affection of a father to stand fast in the profession of “the faith once delivered to the saints,” he felt, perhaps, less surprise than grief at such defections from the ranks of the professed adherents of distinguishing grace, and deeply did he lament the superficial character of that attachment to the truths of the gospel, which falsified its loudest professions, by yielding to the magic influence of popular theological refinements. Still more deeply

wounded must he have been to know, that such instability in any, of whom he had entertained such sanguine expectations, should occasion disengenuous reflections on himself and his ministry, not to say an ungenerous detraction of his talents and labours, from which they have derived benefits, once gratefully acknowledged, but now superciliously forgotten! "Lord, what is man!"

The falling away of some, however, from their avowed doctrinal principles, whatever disappointment of his hopes it might occasion, was viewed by Mr. Stevens with no great surprise. The offence of the cross, the disfavour and discredit which generally attach to a firm and consistent profession of its discriminating doctrines, he well knew would hardly be endurable, except by those whose faith in those doctrines stood "in the power of God," who were "rooted and grounded," by an experimental acquaintance with their preciousness, in that sovereign and everlasting love, from which those doctrines derive their eternal origin, special character, and determinate end. Long and frequent observation had also taught him that aspirants to popular distinction and favour, seldom effectually withstand the influence of certain tactics commonly put into requisition to decry the doctrines of grace, and to exhibit in a fascinating aspect the modern theories of an undistinguishing and indeterminate system of divine mercy. Representations, little better than *caricatures* of absolute sovereignty and grace, are not unfrequently drawn of the *revolting* exclusiveness, deformity, and monstrosity of HYPER-CALVINISM; contrasted with which the lovely figure of UNIVERSAL CHARITY, as embellished with all the blandishments and insinuating forms of address her admirers are wont to employ, can scarcely fail to exercise an influence too powerful to be effectually resisted, except by those whose love of the *truth* is founded in an heart-felt experience of its divine excellency and power. Himself deeply and experimentally taught in the knowledge and sanctifying efficacy of sovereign grace, and which was the ground of the stability of his *own* faith, Mr. Stevens did not expect unshaken firmness of principle in others, otherwise than by that divine teaching which had rendered him stedfast against every wind of doctrine, and immoveably firm in an age of alarming degeneracy and apostacy from the faith.

During the latter years of his life, Mr. Stevens was not

exempt from the inconveniencies incident to the infirmities of increasing age, and occasional bodily indisposition. A remarkably robust constitution, and the almost uninterrupted enjoyment of a sound state of health, evidently began to be impaired and affected, years before the period of his closing labours. Occasional interruptions consequently occurred to him in the ministerial work, and a less vigorous application to studious labours, both for the pulpit and the press, became indispensable. This necessary relaxation of mental effort was regarded by him not as an *agreeable* release from long continued toil, conducive to the comfort of his declining years, but as a *painful privation*, requiring the exercise of great self-denial, and compelling him to forego, to a certain extent, one of the chief sources of his happiness. Throughout his whole life, he had unremittingly accustomed himself to habits of studious thought and reflection; every available portion of his time was devoted to those retired mental pursuits, which subversed the great ends of his ministry, and promoted the interests of truth and holiness. His reading was extensive, and though he passed his days in comparative seclusion, his acquaintance with what was passing in what is called the religious world was by no means circumscribed. The varied and controversial character of his writings, the fulness and depth of his pulpit ministrations, and the abundance of his conversational resources on all subjects relating to the revealed will of God, evinced no slight knowledge of every variety of human authors, creeds, and arguments, whilst his deep acquaintance with the sacred oracles, the comprehensive view he took of the economy of saving grace, and the singular and powerful gifts with which God had furnished him for his great work, imparted to his ministry an instructiveness, a peculiarly engaging, enriching, and edifying character, fraught with the unction and power of the Holy Ghost. His preparations for the pulpit received careful and studious attention. In the selection of his subjects and the arrangement of his discourses he was habitually laborious. The leading thoughts and minor branches of his sermons were generally committed to paper, no doubt for the purpose of aiding his memory, and presenting his subject in a clear, perspicuous manner. Sometimes he wrote his thoughts at considerable length,—at *all* times he conscientiously devoted considerable attention to the study

and arrangement of his subjects. In *his* estimation, *pulpit* work was *solemn* work. To present a sacrifice to the Lord that had cost him little or nothing was inimical to his faith, and repugnant to his feelings. If, under any uncontrollable circumstances, he had to appear in the pulpit without due preparation, or, as was sometimes the case, with frustrated intentions, he found a supply in his Lord's fulness, and the streams not unfrequently became a fulness to others. But of such unpreparedness in his public ministrations he made no fulsome boast; rather did he secretly deplore the necessity of that, which some ministers are exceedingly anxious that every body should know, but of which they seldom need give people information,—that *they* preach without study and pre-meditation.

Mr. Stevens made no pretensions to any such ability, nor was he accustomed to emerge from the uncongenial habits of social and frivolous intercourse into the solemnities of God's service. Whether at home among his own people, visiting his friends, or engaged to preach on any public occasion, he could not feel happy did he not proceed from the retirement of the closet into the engagements of the sanctuary. The indulgence of a garrulous disposition would have been with him an ill-preparation for dispensing the gospel of God; and to indulge in the frivolity which has sometimes been known to precede the entrance of ministers into the pulpit, would have been felt by Mr. Stevens altogether incompatible with the nature of his work, and a desecration of his sacred office. Before entering the pulpit he was reserved and distant in his manner, evidently absorbed in thoughtfulness; and generally he sought to avoid the least annoyance that might be occasioned by converse with friends. His manner in the pulpit was solemn, dignified, and commanding, while not unfrequently a sweet, affecting simplicity pervaded the utterances of his heart. In his approaches to God there oftentimes appeared a holy familiarity, a fervency of spirit, a singleness of heart, a simplicity and fulness of expression, together with a delightful savour of Christ that could not fail to produce in the minds of the devout the most solemn and beneficial impressions. His prayers were not rambling expositions of his creed, yet in the fervour of his pleadings he never lost sight of the importance of his faith. His petitions were not interspersed with exegetical discussions of his

principles, but they nevertheless presented a devotional embodiment of those fundamental truths, which were never felt to be more valuable and precious than when available at a throne of grace, as an incentive to faith, holy boldness, and unwavering confidence. His services at the altar of God were consequently peculiarly *instructive*, while they seldom failed to realize to the devotional mind a lively sense of fellowship with Him who is the exceeding joy of all his humble worshippers.

As a *preacher*, it is felt that any description of his character must fail to convey an adequate conception of his varied and consummate abilities, or the peculiarly striking features of his ministry. All his discourses were richly fraught with the savour of those glorious truths which exhibit the character, grace, and glory of the triune God of salvation. The essential and derived glories of the Son of God in his complex character, as the anciently established medium of divine revelation, and as the centre of eternal love, grace, and mercy, were the fundamental themes of his ministry. He preached Christ and *him crucified*. On subjects of a doctrinal, experimental, or practical nature, he universally took his stand at *the cross*; whence his powerful mind took its excursive flights in the radiatory glories of the illustrious Sufferer, and, soaring to the heights of his ancient glory, or expanding to the distant scene of his future consummated triumphs, he delighted to unfold the amazing mystery of godliness, wherein the First-born Son of the Father is made unto the adopted family, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption.

His style of preaching was sententious, dispassioned, and solemn. Occasionally he would assume an argumentative mode of address, and not unfrequently pursue his train of thought in a manner interrogatory and colloquial. There was, however, nothing artificial in his delivery. The natural ease and beautiful simplicity with which he was accustomed to testify the gospel of the grace of God, bespoke his deep acquaintance with the things of the Spirit, and evinced the delight he felt in expatiating on the sublime themes of his ministry. In opening his subject his utterance was generally slow, and his sentences pithy and striking. If the relevancy of his introductory remarks were not immediately discovered, it was but a few moments ere his subject was laid open by a few propositions that at once discovered

the originality of its conception, the harmony of its parts, and the comprehensive view the preacher had taken of his theme. His powers of amplification were singularly great, —there seemed no end to his discursiveness or the variety of his illustrations. He frequently rose with his theme to a lofty eloquence and sublimity of thought, an elevation of soul, that seemed to impart an almost supernatural character to his ministrations; while the holy earnestness and deep solemnity of his manner, carried conviction to his hearers that the truths he enforced were shedding on his own mind a divinely powerful influence.

Mr. Stevens's discourses were frequently replete with originality, evincing a habit of peculiar and profound thinking. The author of "The Metropolitan Pulpit," in his sketch of his ministerial character and talents, scarcely allows the latter attribute to be appropriate to the late pastor of Salem; but it is probable that among metropolitan critics, very few are to be found who could sufficiently appreciate the *great truths* inculcated in his ministry to enable them to judge with accuracy of the degree of his profundity. And the presumption of Mr. Grant's *incompetency* is not a little strengthened by his inability to understand an alleged "favorite" distinction he has heard Mr. Stevens make between "the rectoral government of God," and his gracious administrations as the God of eternal love. The same writer, however, gives the following just description of him:—

"He is held in high esteem as a preacher, by all who are capable of making a distinction between really valuable and flashy matter. He has nothing showy about him, but he is always sensible and solid. He is never superficial; he does not content himself with skimming the surface, but pierces through and works below it. He is a peculiar thinker; the ideas which occur to him would never suggest themselves to the minds of others, if preaching on the same subject.... I have often," continues Mr. Grant, "heard him give utterance to a succession of felicitous things. When in his happier moods, his congregation are all attention; their ears, if I may so speak, are on the rack to catch the words as they fall from his lips. They look at times, indeed, as if they were absolutely impatient for what is coming; for it is no uncommon thing to see twenty or thirty of the congregation standing up, all at once, in their pews, and not only listening with marked eagerness to what is falling from the lips of the preacher, but looking with that fixedness of gaze upon him, which implies that they are panting for the delivery of the entire passage, which has awakened an unusually deep interest in their minds."

In the later years of his life, Mr. Stevens's ministry became increasingly valuable, both to his own people and to others who were favoured occasionally to hear him. His discourses contained the same fulness of those sublime truths, which had ever distinguished his preaching, but they flowed from his lips with an unusually enriching savour, and a deepened experimental sweetness. The height of increasing infirmities, and the gradual decay of his health, evidently impaired the energy of his mind, and at times subjected him to a degree of depression, which seemed to indicate that his labours were drawing to a close. The occasional interruption of his ministrations, through bodily indisposition, together with other circumstances, sometimes wrought on his imagination, and induced the idea that his ministry was becoming less efficient and useful, but at no period of his life was his preaching more highly appreciated for the spirituality, sweetness, and power that pervades his testimony. The expansion of his mind—the depth and richness of his experience—the simplicity and savouriness of his thoughts—and the all-pervading consciousness which he evidently felt of the approaching realization of eternal things, imparted a feeling of more than ordinary interest to the ministrations of his closing years, and yielded to those seasons a holy solemnity that will never be forgotten by his beloved people.

In the year 1842, he was compelled for a short time to relinquish his ministerial engagements. General debility, attended with a distressing cough, and great difficulty of breathing, obliged him to retire from his labours. In the month of June he repaired to Gravesend, for the benefit of entire rest and the country air.

The following letter was addressed by him, to one of his warmly attached friends, during his residence there :

“ Lord's Day, Four o'clock.

“ My dear Sister Sarah,—I have never before been so set aside from my official employ ; it seems strange to me, but my Master's will is law, not mine. I have been at Salem repeatedly to-day, without seeing any one, or being seen by any there. I have aimed to meet my beloved friends at the mercy-seat, and have frequently implored the divine presence to be with my brethren who should preach, and with my dear people who might hear. I can only be with you in spirit, while my body is here. But our Lord is not confined, he can be in all places where his people dwell. I pray his blessing may rest upon my flock,—may accompany the word,—may rest like dew on

herbs of the earth, and greatly refresh his plants, and revive all drooping souls. More than this is promised, nor can his promise fail. He is engaged to be as a well of living water,—springing up into everlasting life: (John iv. 14.) It is well to find that our *acts* are maintained by a powerful, living spring; that our desires are the *out-flowings* of a *hidden life*: and that Christ is its *root* and *pattern*. ‘I live,’ said one, ‘yet not I, but Christ liveth in me.’ O what a mystery is here! that He who is *reigning* in glory should be *living in us*—acting in us—influencing us—and diffusing his holy qualities in our souls! And is not this the case, my friend? Is he not formed in us the hope of glory? Is he not to us the way, the truth, and the life, by which we go to the presence of the Father, as known and enjoyed in the kingdom above? The *way* of access and acceptance: the *life* in which we move thitherwards, and the *truth* by which we are lighted in our way. He is the life of our spirits, the path of our journey, and the light by which we see it, and walk on in his steps, till we come to the banks of Jordan. He is *all*; therefore, without him we *have* nothing, and with him we *want* nothing. More than all we cannot have, and less than all we must not crave. O happy plan to make One, a fulness to all, and all exhibitors of that One! He shows himself in many, and shows many in himself; His honour is interwoven with their welfare, and their happiness secures his praise. Did he humble himself that he might be exalted? Then how just it is for us to humble ourselves under his mighty hand, that he may be exalted in us and in our salvation. He served us with *his best*, shall we be so ungrateful as to withhold *our best* from him? His best was of immense worth, but ours is a poor offering even when presented! Abel offered his best, and though we cannot do as we would, it would be base to keep back what we have. Our pride is wont to hinder us, by acting under a garb of feigned humility. We hear many say what poor creatures they are, and they cannot come forward—O no. But suppose they could once think more highly of themselves and their performances, would they not then appear? O yes! O yes! How vain a thing is fallen man! Humility, thou ornament of saints, how rare is thy genuine and extensive growth. Lord, impart it to my soul, and may a double portion of that and of every grace, adorn my esteemed friend, and her

Affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.”

Mr. Stevens resumed his pastoral labours with his health and spirits much recruited, in the early part of August, and was again welcomed by his beloved flock, among whom he again ministered the word of life, and laboured as a giant refreshed with new wine.

The subsequent period of his ministry was characterized by the same delightful openings of the revealed truth of God, in the person, work, and glories of Immanuel. Life and power, with an unusual degree of unction, attended the word from his lips, and the voice of joy and rejoicing was

frequently heard in the tabernacles of Salem. During the last few years of his life, however, the aspect of circumstances was such as sensibly affected the venerable pastor's mind. Removals by death and providence, with some other circumstances of a painful nature, seemed to indicate a somewhat wintry season, which had no little tendency to depress his feelings, and to induce the apprehension that his work was nearly concluded.

The following letter to a valued member of his church, is expressive of his feelings at the time of its being written.

"To Mrs. M.

"October 30th, 1844.

"My highly esteemed Friend in Jesus,—I am sorry to have given you so much reason to imagine I had forgotten you, while I have been day after day thinking of calling upon you. . . . I find it very difficult to get about as I could wish, through my feebleness; and if I walk, I get into a strong perspiration, then I am apt to be seized with a cold, and then comes a cough. Thus years reduce us to know what formerly we knew little of. I could talk of being old years ago, but now I sensibly feel it. As years multiply on the one hand, so they decrease on the other: the more there are of them upon me, the fewer there are before me! I may now say with the honoured Apostle, 'Now is our salvation nearer than when we believed.' Time, that carries the christian away day by day from all things here, cannot but bear him daily nearer to his celestial home. The river of rolling time runs into the boundless ocean of eternity; where all the vessels of mercy meet in the due time set for their arrival. There no storms arise, nor foes, nor fears, are known.

'Tis only here that storms arise,
For all is calm above the skies.'

"It is to this blest region we aspire, for here we have no continuing city. We need none here, knowing in ourselves that we have a better and an enduring substance in heaven. 'It is reserved,' saith Peter, 'in heaven for you, who are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation.' What a mercy, Sister Ann, to be thus provided for, in a region so quiet, so happy, and endless. The glooms of this low land cannot extend their darkening effects to that high country, where the inhabitants are all righteous. There the sun never sets, for 'there is no night there.' God is their glory and joy; not at seasons, but continually and for ever. *Here*, while some are rejoicing, others are weeping; but *there* is no more sorrowing nor crying: the days of mourning are ended. When holiness is perfected, then happiness will be full. Thus have we more in hope, than we have in possession. But we are at present on this side of Jordan, and have not yet finished our journey, nor suffered all the pains of this mortal life. Crosses must be borne their full time, before they can be turned into crowns. Still the change is sure, and will be finally satisfactory. Keep fast hold of his arm who promises to uphold you with the right hand of his righteousness. Cast your burden on him, who engages to sustain

you. Expect his Holy Spirit to renew your strength, to enliven your hope, to witness your adoption, and help you in prayer. It is true that Christ is our consolation, and equally so, that the Holy Ghost is our Comforter. He sets up Christ in our minds, and endears him to our souls, through precious faith and spiritual affection. *Personal* enjoyment may be had, while *public aspects* around us are very gloomy and discouraging. Salem resembles the eagle when it sheds its feathers at molting time; whether it shall ever be said its youth is *renewed* like the eagle's, time must prove. No interested friend can help desiring that the Lord would revive his work. He, and he only can raise up a drooping spirit, and a wasting church. I cannot but feel concerned seriously for a restoration ere I depart; but though Israel be not gathered, said the prophet, yet shall I be glorious in his eyes, and my God shall be my strength. Accept my sincere christian love, and believe me, your interested pastor,

JOHN STEVENS."

The inauspicious circumstances above alluded to were rendered the more painful by the sensible diminution of physical strength which he now increasingly felt, and the frequent attacks of bodily illness with which he became visited. On more than one occasion he was taken alarmingly ill in the pulpit, and compelled abruptly to relinquish the remainder of the service, and retire from the house of God. These visitations of his heavenly Father's afflictive hand produced a visible alteration in his personal appearance, enfeebled his constitution, and as he was frequently heard to complain, impaired the powers of his memory. Serious apprehensions began to be entertained by his people, that his removal from them was not far distant, and great solicitude was felt for the welfare of the church and the health of their beloved pastor. He was frequently urged by his brethren in office to relax his labours, and permit them to procure, if possible, some permanent assistance. To this he sometimes seemed inclined, yet he was anxious to continue his regular labours as long as possible.

It was not until the month of March, 1847, that he relinquished in part the services of the Sabbath, when Mr. J. Thornley, late of Swavesey, engaged to assist him; from which period Mr. Stevens generally preached but once in the day; and in the month of May he felt himself again under the necessity of relinquishing, for a time, the pulpit altogether. After about six weeks he again resumed his labours, and, assisted by Mr. Thornley, continued to fill the pulpit.

The Lord was still making it evident that his labours

were greatly blessed, for in the month of June, 1847, ten persons were baptized at Salem, by Mr. Thornley, who were subsequently added to the church. The hopes of his people were again revived, by the renewed strength with which he was enabled to minister the word of life, and the circumstance of his being able, contrary to expectation, to fulfil several engagements at public meetings. At Hampstead, Hayes, and Homerton, he occupied his usual post at the Anniversaries at those places, and in his journal he records the happiness he enjoyed on each of these occasions. The delightful season realized under his sermon at Homerton, on the 16th of August, will it is believed never be forgotten by the ministers and friends who were favoured to hear it. Mr. Stevens selected as his text the striking and beautiful passage recorded in Rom. xiii. 11: "*Now is your salvation nearer than when ye believed.*" The discourse, if not so intellectually great as many others which have proceeded from his lips, presented a combination of spiritual excellencies that seemed to *entrance* his auditory with the most delightful views of the gospel of salvation, and the glory of the heavenly world. The venerable and almost heavenly appearance of the preacher, seemed to combine with the fulness, sweetness, and power of his utterances, to produce the impressions which many described as having been beyond expression, enrapturing and divine. The solemnity and simplicity of his manner, the holy familiarity with which he entered into his theme, the almost realizing view which he himself evidently enjoyed, and opened up to his hearers, of the proximate glories of the heavenly state, were such as none can adequately describe, though many seemed to be wrapt in an ecstasy of spiritual enjoyment.

The following description of the feelings with which the above mentioned discourse was heard by one of Mr. Stevens's fellow labourers in the gospel is subjoined as conveying an idea of its peculiar character and attendant effects:—

Mr. Foreman writes,—“I heard the sermon which Mr. Stevens preached on his last Anniversary visit at Homerton, and I shall never forget it! The *man* and the *remarks* were both made in solemn and peculiar forms, impressive on my whole heart that morning. The aged, enfeebled, worn out, solemn, sainted appearance of the dear man, as a man of God, and a servant of our Lord Jesus Christ;—the reflectively rich and instructive; contemplatively sweet, simple, and social; and prospectively familiar, beautiful, inviting, cheering and confidential remarks in the sermon, set my whole soul on the wing of thought,

while, the past, present, and to come, were condensed into one picture of the sublimest realities presented to the eye of my mind, as contained in God's salvation of his people. That I heard, and this I say *feelingly*, for myself of that sermon, while I must confess that I am not prepared to say any thing instructively of it. I could not, either in the words, or in the form, do any thing like common justice to the talent, the favour of the occasion, or the embalmed memory of our dear brother, in attempting the recitation of any of the ideas ; while the sermon, as a whole, I believe I shall with endearing recollections, carry with me to my grave : and I never heard our dear brother's voice, nor saw his face, after that morning."

By many who were privileged to listen to him on the above memorable occasion, it was thought the end of his labours was at hand ! His enfeebled frame, however, was sustained to enable him to continue in the work of the Lord a few weeks longer, during which, notwithstanding great weakness and bodily pain, he was favoured to come forth richly laden with the treasures of his divine Master's fulness.

Frequent seasons of delightful enlargement and liberty were granted him during his last few Sabbaths at Salem, where, amidst the fervent prayers and earnest solicitudes of an affectionate people, he was destined *soon finally to appear!* His last discourse was delivered on Sabbath morning, September 19th, on the occasion of the ANNIVERSARY AT SALEM ; Mr. Bonner, of Unicorn Yard, and Mr. Murrell, of St. Neots, preached the other parts of the day. The latter having enjoyed an intimate friendship with Mr. Stevens for many years, and regularly preached at his Anniversary, it is a gratifying incident that connected him with his now departed friend, on the last occasion of his public ministrations.

Mr. Stevens took for his text Heb. ix. 28 : " Christ was once offered to bear the sins of many." A sketch of the sermon has already been presented to the public in the Gospel Herald for November, which for the fulness of truth it contains, and the last public testimony of an able and faithful servant of the Lord Jesus Christ to the scriptural and glorious doctrine of the ATONEMENT, is worthy of being written in letters of gold !

In the joyous anticipation of the future glory of ransomed sinners, Mr. Stevens spoke as if a consciousness of the nearly approaching blessedness had familiarized him with the bright reversion awaiting him. " *All,*" said he, " *will*

sit down, joined in ancient love interest, kindled by the same spark, washed in the same blood, clothed in the same righteousness, accepted in the same person. All then will be happy—quite happy. I SOMETIMES FEEL AS IF I SHOULD BE GLAD TO HEAVE THE SIGH. And what then? JOIN THE SONG! Oh! my friends, heaven is better than earth; the sight of heaven than that of faith; the fulfilment of the promise than the promise itself."

How soon were these anticipations to be realized by the beloved man of God! The evening of that day witnessed his final withdrawal from the house of God, and his affectionate people whom he should see no more!

From this time his strength gradually decayed; but it was not until the following Saturday that he became materially worse. On that day his friend, Mr. Murrell, called to see him, when he freely conversed on the things of God, especially on approaching death and eternity. Mr. M. remarked to him, that on the near approach of death, when brought to the brink of the grave, things are simplified, and matters are brought into a small compass. Mr. Stevens in his reply, dwelt upon the strength and source of his consolations in the prospect of his approaching change, and exclaimed, with tears falling down his cheeks—

"I have no clothes of my own to appear in before God, but the garment of his righteousness; and have nothing to plead but the blood of his heart: I could wish the Lord would either give me strength for my work, or take me home to see his face in glory."

During this conversation he complained of feeling very ill, and soon afterwards retired to bed, when he began rapidly to sink under the influence of the disorder, which baffled all medical skill, and brought him within a few hours to the gates of death. The nature of his affliction was said to be such that required him to be kept as quiet and undisturbed as possible; consequently none beside his own family could be permitted to see him during the last few days of his mortal existence. It is therefore regretted that the *latest* testimony of his faith, and the triumphs of his soul could not have been witnessed by his brethren and friends. It was, however, the will of the Lord that this privilege should be withheld, and as it was under the direction of his medical attendants, it might possibly be conducive to the repose of his last hours.

His end was calm and peaceful, and, during the short period he lingered, not a word of distrust or doubt escaped him. From the nature of his disorder his mind occasionally wandered, and sometimes he appeared insensible to everything around him. At other times he expressed the happy feelings of his soul in some weighty sentences and fervent ejaculations.

Receiving a visit from his youngest brother, he recognised him, and embracing him most affectionately, he prayed with and for him, in a strain of fervour and sweetness that rendered the scene truly affecting. On the Saturday previous to his death, while sitting up in his bed, he exclaimed with great fervour—

“I shall behold his face,
I shall his power adore,
And sing the wonders of his grace
For evermore!”

On another occasion he was heard to say, whilst apparently musing on the objects which now absorbed his whole soul,

“All the glory—all the glory—
All the glory shall be thine.”

The evening before his death, when his family were around him, he poured out his soul for them, for the church, and for himself, in a manner so affecting, and in language so sublime and melting, that it seemed as though he were *inspired* to give the loftiest expression of the triumph of his faith over the last enemy, and to testify the truth of that glorious gospel he had so long and faithfully preached. “Never,” writes his beloved daughter, “can I forget the tone of voice in which my dear parent entreated heaven for us all. Indeed, his ardent petitions for the church, and his family, and his ascriptions of thanksgiving to God are indelibly impressed on my mind; though, being so affectingly interested, I seemed in an indefinable state of mind, which deprived me of the power of recollecting anything in particular that he uttered.”

Truly,—

“The chamber where the good man meets his fate,
Is privileged beyond the common walk
Of virtuous life, quite on the verge of heaven.”

In his last hours he was evidently much engaged in converse with God. *Private prayer* had ever been his delightful employ, from the earliest period of his spiritual life, and through the whole course of his ministerial and studious labours. And it was now

“ His watch-word at the gates of death,
He entered heaven by prayer.”

On Wednesday Oct. 6, 1847, about twelve at noon, he slept in Jesus, and his ransomed spirit took its flight to the realms of bliss, where, face to face, he now beholds the ancient, everlasting Son of God, whose primitive glories, pre-eminent character, and perfect work, he delighted to contemplate and proclaim to the church of God and his fellow-sinners on earth. Intelligence of his departure was rapidly spread through the extensive circle of his friends, and extending to those churches in the country by whom he was known and greatly beloved, one general feeling of mournful regret succeeded the event which had removed the valiant STEVENS hence. The following Sabbath at Salem was a day of weeping and lamentation. Mr. Murrell again appeared in the pulpit, now for ever vacated by the revered pastor; while sadness and sorrow were depicted on every countenance, and the services of the day were proceeded with in a profusion of tears.

“ But why those sorrows for the happy soul,
Who swiftly ran, and surely reached the goal?
Fixing by faith, upon the crown, his eyes,
Pressed to the mark, and grasped the glorious prize.
Why heave our bosoms, why our spirits faint?
Earth lost a christian, heaven has gained a saint!
True, in the church his graces sparkled bright,
But sparkle clearer in the realms of light.
O, blissful change! O, happy past compare!
There shines a sun, who glittered *here* a star;
Who blazed *below* with fervour, hope, and love,
Now with majestic splendour beams *above*;
Placed on a throne, fast by his Saviour, God,
Praises the Lamb that washed him in his blood;
Dwells in a world where troubles ever cease,
And drinks of fountains of eternal peace.”

On Friday, Oct. 15, the funeral of the lamented pastor took place, which was attended by several members of his

mourning family, his bereaved church, and an immense concourse of friends from all parts of the metropolis, including a numerous body of ministers, both of London, and from the country, kindly invited by the church to attend on the mournful occasion. At an early hour the church and congregation, together with the ministers, assembled at Salem Chapel, and formed into a procession, which proceeded at one o'clock, to the late residence of the deceased, where the funeral cortège was completed; consisting of nearly thirty mourning coaches, and a still greater number of other vehicles; beside a vast concourse of persons, who on foot, joined the procession, and testified their regard for the memory of the deceased, by following his remains to their last resting-place. The scene at the place of interment was deeply affecting. Thousands were assembled on the romantic heights of *Highgate Cemetery*, the spot selected for the repose of all that could die of this eminent servant of Jesus Christ.

The solemn service was commenced by Mr. Felton of Deptford, who offered an appropriate and solemn prayer; which was followed by a truly affecting and affectionate address from Mr. Murrell, in which was briefly delineated the character of the deceased, as a holy man of God, an eminent minister of the gospel of Christ, and a faithful pastor of the church of God; whose removal from the scene of his labours was also impressively dwelt on as involving an irreparable loss to his beloved family and the church, and a solemn admonition to the ministers of Christ to watch on the walls of Zion with all diligence and fidelity. The 409th hymn in Mr. Stevens's selection was then given out by Mr. Wyard, and sang by the entire assembly, whose harmonious strains, suppressed emotions, and flowing tears, presented a scene the most solemn and touching we ever remember to have witnessed. The benediction being pronounced, the body was conveyed to one of the catacombs of the cemetery, and the mourners and friends of the deceased descended to view the place that had received a deposit more precious than the sorrowful feelings of weeping multitudes could fully express.

The following Lord's-day the mournful event was improved at Salem, by the brethren Murrell and Foreman. The former preached in the morning, from 2 Tim. iv. 7, 8: "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course,"

&c. The attention of the mourning assembly was very appropriately and solemnly directed to the *conflict*, the *victory*, and the anticipated *honour* of a faithful servant of Jesus Christ. Mr. Foreman preached in the evening on Gen. xv. 16; taking occasion from the text to point out some of the leading particulars of Mr. Stevens's faith, and to vindicate him from the misrepresentations of those who were hostile to the views he entertained of the gospel of Christ. The congregations on both occasions were exceedingly large—vast numbers could not gain admittance; and the solemn services of the day were characterized by universal mourning and sorrow.

Thus have closed the life and labours of Mr. John Stevens, whose character, ministerial talents, and extensive usefulness in the church of Christ, justly commanded the unfeigned esteem of all who could appreciate unyielding integrity, uncompromising faithfulness, undissembled godliness, and an untiring devotedness and consecration to the cause of Jesus Christ. He was not however a *perfect* man,—of this none had a deeper consciousness than himself. A sense of numerous frailties and defects, as well as inherent evils of the heart, perhaps few men more constantly retained, more deeply lamented, than our departed friend. It has frequently been observed as a distinguished merit of *inspired* biography, that it presents the *eccentricities* as well as the *excellencies* of human character. Be it so; but that very peculiarity seems to preclude, to a great extent, the possibility of imitation by reason of the infallibility of the pen, which, with a *wise design and without danger* drew the picture. The faults and failings of good men are sufficiently conspicuous, without a monumental inscription to perpetuate their remembrance; nor does faithfulness suffer any impeachment by a charitable oversight of imperfection and folly.

Those excellencies of character which so eminently adorned the life, conversation, and ministry of the departed Stevens, were an exemplary testimony to the sanctifying influence of those truths, of which he was distinguished a preacher. "By the grace of God I am what I am," was ever the appropriate acknowledgement of his lips. High moral integrity was a uniform and prominent feature of all his actions. His kindness, sympathy, and benevolence towards many of the saints and servants of the Lord Jesus,

will be long gratefully remembered; but never fully disclosed till the period of final reward.

He was employed in the work of the ministry about fifty-one years; and the blessed results of his labours, both in extending the cause of Christ, and in establishing believers in the faith of the gospel, it is impossible fully to estimate. His early ministry was abundantly owned of God in various places; and in the metropolis, where he laboured with assiduity and zeal during a period of thirty-six years, he maintained an honourable standing, and successfully advocated the great principles of absolute and discriminating grace. He occupied the chapel in Meard's Court exactly twenty-three years; having preached his *first* sermon on Sept. 19, 1822, and delivered his *last* discourse on the same date in 1847. During the entire period of his ministry, he baptized about 737 persons, which with ten baptized by Mr. Thornley, and five by Mr. Murrell, at Salem, make the number of 752 persons baptized during the whole period of his pastorate.

From the year 1822, when the church was re-formed at York Street, to the period of his death, 926 persons were received by him into the fellowship of the church. In the course of that time, there were removed from their communion by death, letters of dismission, separation, and withdrawal, 530 persons; leaving, at the time of his death, about 400 members, to mourn the loss of a faithful friend, and an affectionate under-shepherd, whose ministry they highly prized, and whose memory is embalmed in their affections.

He has left his bereaved people in the enjoyment of peace, and the unity of the Spirit evidently pervades their assemblies. The respected deacons of the church, all of whom were devotedly attached to the late pastor, are living in the confidence and affections of those among whom they bear office, and are sedulously seeking to promote the welfare of the church, for whom many prayers are offered, that *Salem* may continue appropriately to bear its honourable designation, that truth and peace may ever abide within its walls, and that the mantle of the departed may be evidently seen to have descended on some one, whom the Lord *alone* can qualify and sustain to bear the ministrations of the sanctuary.

With the highly esteemed widow of our departed friend,

also, deep sympathy is felt under the loss she has sustained, by the removal of the honoured servant of Christ, with whose labours her affectionate and deep solitudes were ever identified. May the residue of her earthly pilgrimage be attended with every consolation from the God of all comfort, and the joy of faith and salvation be realized in the bright hope of her not very distant translation to the heavenly kingdom.

For the surviving family of the deceased, also, an interesting feeling of prayerful desire is cherished, that the sovereignly imparted blessing of their father's God may descend upon them, in answer to his dying prayers; and that the gifts of grace and glory may be their lasting heritage.

May his beloved children, whose faith and fellowship identify them with the interests of the redeemed church on earth, be ever enriched from the fulness whence their glorified parent drew his copious supplies, and be hasting towards that world, where they shall again meet him,—where Christ is all in all; being “found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless.” Amen.

BRIEF

CONVERSATIONAL OBSERVATIONS

AND

REMARKS FROM THE PULPIT,

BY MR. JOHN STEVENS.

“That we shall have a general knowledge of each other in the heavenly world, I firmly believe; but whether it will be connected with circumstances in this lower world, I cannot tell. God can certainly retain so much in our remembrance as shall be necessary to our felicity, and drop the rest. I believe we shall know one another in the celestial world without any of those natural feelings some people talk of; as of the delight which will fill their souls to meet their friends at the bar of God. I think the only ground of our delight in the case will be in seeing another vessel of mercy, after all its wanderings, brought home to God. Another says, ‘How shall I meet such an one on that great day?’ I answer, My friend, you need not fear: no past connections in this lower world will, on that day, afford either pleasure or pain, and though we *may review* the past, it will be without that feeling which would cling to another, because I loved him here; for I consider the whole enjoyments of heaven will be completely *spiritual*. When I look at my connections *here*, I remember there was a time when such a person was nothing to me; there was a time when that person comprehended all my pleasures; there came a time when that person was nothing to me again—he was gone, the relationship was dissolved! all these connections I see are transitory, are for a time only, and then for ever end. The relationship of heaven will be purely spiritual; Christ is the comprehending head!”

“Christ is the centre of love’s vast circumference, within

which all the election of grace are comprehended. He is the centre—love is the circle drawn around, and all the radii, or lines drawn from the circumference, meet in the centre, and are from the centre united to the rim. The nearer any one approaches the centre, the nearer he comes to Christ, the nearer we come to our brethren, till all meet and are lost in the glory of this great centre for ever. All the church is within this circle, and ever have been; for though we *fell off* from the centre, we fell no further than infinite love could permit us: ‘hitherto shalt thou go, but no further.’ God has always had a love round about us, and beyond us, called by Moses, ‘his everlasting arms,’ and nothing can separate us therefrom: therefore when we had got to the circumference, and even looked over it, God turns us back, and brings us up, and fixes us eternally in Christ the centre. This shews us that Christ is an attracting centre, who marvellously, mysteriously, and everlastingly holds all the parts together, and prevents them from flying off.”

“I am not sure whether finally, angels and saints will not be of one family, though some good men query about it. I think they will be so on the ground of *election*. Angels, we know, are elect, and so are saints. Angels abide in that super-creation state (as it is termed) in which they were chosen, and *to which* the saints (though they fell) are returning and raising up by the redemption of the cross.

“Many good people say, ‘Oh, surely we shall be above angels.’ I am not sure that we shall, by any means: ‘I am Gabriel that *stand in the presence of God*,’ said the Angel: what more can the saint in heaven say?”

“*To do the will of God*, is heaven. I conceive our heaven will be so purely spiritual, so divested of natural ideas, that an angel, if sent by his Maker *into the midst of hell*, would yet be in heaven—would carry his heaven with him. The whole felicity, I conceive, is summed up in *doing the will of God perfectly*.”

“I can see no harm for my own part, provided it is done reverently, properly, and humbly, in amusing the intellect (if that be not a term too familiar) in *thinking* to the very farthest bound of imagination. For instance, to spend an hour in enquiring what was Satan before he fell; how moral evil began with him; the number of devils he drew after him, &c., &c.; provided I do not substitute *them* for *facts*, as the ground of my hope, or the basis of my confi-

dence. So when a brother says, 'It is time to go to prayer,' I lay my devil's tale aside instantly. I know I dare not *venture before God* with any thing of that kind."

"A view of what might have been done is not wholly unuseful. It expands the mind, and gives us higher ideas of His knowledge. When we think of a Being knowing our every thought from our cradle to our tomb,—what we have eaten and what we have drank,—every moment of our sleeping hours, with every action, every minutia of our lives, and every step we have taken from the first totterings of infancy, to the infirmities of grey hairs; it is to us inconceivable, and more than *any creature* can know; but it is still only the knowledge of *creatures*! I consider self-knowledge in God to be the *highest* kind of knowledge:—the knowledge of his own boundless perfections and infinity of nature, with the ever present view of all he *might* have done in the operation of his uncircumscribed ability, as well as what he has decreed to do, exceeds *the whole knowledge of creatureship together*. God possesses the knowledge of all possibilities, as well as the knowledge of all certainties: this may be described, as knowledge without will."

"In wisdom and knowledge we shall (in heaven) be perfect; and when we have attained the height of the first archangel, we shall still be incomparably beneath the excellence of the soul of Christ:—thus we shall go *on, on, on*, ever grasping, ever growing, ever climbing, still new Alps appear."

"Christ brings us to the Father, the Father brings us to Christ, drawing us with the cords of his love, for 'every man that hath heard, and hath learned of the Father, cometh unto me.' But here lies the difference: the Father brings us to Christ with all our pollution; Christ brings us to his Father ransomed, freed, and saved, 'without spot, wrinkle, or any such thing.'"

"Christ was not made a curse by taking on him human nature, as some suppose—human nature was no part of the curse; it was by taking the *sins* of his people upon himself that he became a curse, and *that for us*."

"Where sin appeared with the blackest aspect, there holiness appeared with the fullest blaze."

"The utmost *gift* that could be bestowed in redemption, was the gift of God's dear Son: the utmost *treasure*,

was the gift of Himself to the church as her portion ; so the utmost *pledge* of an eternal state of blessedness is the gift of his Spirit."

"There is no ground of confidence for creatures but in the Son of God: Heaven has wisely founded mutable creatureship in an immutable headship."

"Christ is not only a living companion, but a living cause of life to the church."

"A christian of desire is a safe man. Desire is the soul and prayer of the body. The desires of the soul are like its *feelers*; the fibres of its root, by which it feels often its enjoyments, supports, and comforts. The plant, while exposed at the top to the winds and weather, has a power to fasten itself with extensive ramifications to the earth, whereby it is firmly supported."

"Never be dispirited by suspicions to loosen your hold of Christ. Stick quite close to him; clasp him about earnestly; *try* what a belief in his perfected doings will do for you."

"Our Lord is not an appendage, a something exterior; He is the vital spring."

"The gospel proceeds *from* grace, is subservient *to* grace, and proclaims grace only."

"Do not look to be clean after nature's strugglings, but after faith's believings."

"The closer you walk with God, the less occasion you will have for many things that have oft drank up your spirit; for converse with the *eminent* unfits us for intimacies with those below."

"Prayers without inborn desires, are as skeletons unanimated, statues without life, and motion without intelligence."

"It is an *awful* thing to pass through the church without an unctious experience of *forgiving* mercy."

"We are the authors of nothing but our own transgressions."

"Our tender Redeemer suffered 'without the gate,' because his heart was towards the Gentiles."

"However *you* may dispute against the justice of God, the Lamb of God confessed it."

"An unknown, unloved, unappropriated Christ leaves a man to *howl* his way through the desert of time, and for ever after, if grace prevent not."

"If we suppose that a large number of the Saviour's purchase are everlastingly detained from him, we must then

suppose, either a deficiency of *will*, a deficiency of *wisdom*, or a deficiency of *power*."

"The adoring of God's *displayed self* is the essence of true religion."

"Every religious fact which is appropriated feelingly, brings its quantum of life, light, and enjoyment."

"The christian's trials are not unnumbered, not unmeasured, not unuseful, not unbearable."

"I deem it a great mercy that my judgment and reverence are maintained, when my enjoyments are quite cut off."

"The christian, from most extensive bounds, fetches in impressions, influences, and enjoyments, which the world can neither give nor take away."

"As is the opinion a man entertains of the infallibility of the scriptures, such will be the regard he pays to its doctrines, promises, and precepts."

"If they should not be moved who suffered many trials and difficulties *for* their religion; surely *we* should not be moved who only suffer trials and difficulties *with* our religion."

"God will at last shew us that he can raise immortal beings above envy, jealousies, fears, fretfulness, and discontent."

"Regeneration is the production of the life of Christ in the soul, by virtue of being chosen from all eternity in Him the living Head. Secondly, it is the commencement of a living and sanctifying union to Him. Thirdly, it is a becoming instated into the new relation of which Christ is the Head."

"The holiness given to a creature is not *his own* nature, but a *new nature*, which God produces in order to association with himself."

"Sanctification may be said to be a crowning blessing, flowing from every branch of gospel grace and truth. I can spare neither life, light, purity, nor love, from sanctification."

"The act of faith is rooted, in the state of the heart."

"In all unholy tempers and unsanctified walking, we *hide* (as it were) our Christ, we *cloak* him, and shew to the world the devil instead of Him! This is not fair,—it is cruel, for there is nothing of that kind in him."

"Your frailty!—don't let it trouble you a moment ;

you are just weak enough to be saved. Had you an abundance of strength and merit, we should have a great mound to move out of the way."

"The mission of the Spirit was designed to remove the eclipse of the sun of righteousness, while he dwelt in a natural body."

Gloss upon Psalm lxxxiv. 5.

"*Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee, O Prince Immanuel*; in whose hearts thy doctrines and commandments are deeply engraven: who passing through the valley of this world's sorrows, make themselves a well of the enjoyments with which they are favoured; the rain also shall fill the reservoirs. They shall go from one degree of spiritual strength to another, till they appear, most merciful God and Father, before thy face in Zion."

"Reasons for believing *Adam* to be included in the number of God's elect family:—First, because had he not been so, there would have been a period, in which our Lord, and his election had no footing on the earth; an exclusion I can by no means admit of. Second, because it does not appear quite consistent to suppose that any but an elect vessel, should have the honour of being so striking a 'figure of Him that was to come.' Third, because of the promise made to him in Eden, which may be termed the first revelation of a Saviour. And fourth, because in that case the whole elected family of God would have sprung from a non-elect and reprobate Root, which does not appear."

"OUR LORD JESUS CHRIST," Jude xxi.

"Our Christ by *the Spirit*; our Jesus by *his merit*; our Lord by *his acquired right*. As Christ *he fills us*; as Jesus *he frees us*; as Lord *he rules over us*."

LETTERS

OF

MR. JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 1.

TO MRS. TOLTON.

My dear Sister in the bowels of Christ Jesus, and heir of ALL THE PROMISES,

Grace, mercy, and peace be with thee from the Holy Three, according to heaven's eternal plan of communing with sinful men on earth. As the eternal God resolved to go forth to communion with creatures, so he also determined what creatures, and who of them he would raise to so unspeakable an honour: while myriads of myriads passed before his infinite mind, and stood present to his view,—in the vast multitude methinks he saw, he loved, he chose my friend unto himself, to be an everlasting monument of his grace. Knowing, sister beloved, your election of God: for our gospel came not unto you in word only, but also in power, and in the Holy Ghost, and in much assurance; and ye became a follower of us and of the Lord, having received the word in much affliction, with joy of the Holy Ghost.

Now, my friend, you can say the gospel has often come with power, and you have been, and are assured of the truth of it, through the Spirit: hereby your election is manifest. But God has done great things for you in other respects. He hath given you to know truth more clearly and comfortably than he has many others, who are equally safe in Christ with you. How many years have you spent in a confused and lifeless society! and there you had continued to this day had not sovereign favour anointed your eyes afresh, and new formed your soul in point of spiritual judgment. All saving influence is felt in the heart through the eye of faith, which receives the shining glories of the adorable Jesus. And under the beams of his face,

while his redeeming beauties are beheld, pure affections are kindled, and the heart delivers up itself as captivated with his charms, and with a determination to acknowledge none other as its Saviour and Lord! This, my friend, you can affirm is the truth. Highly favoured woman! Let thy soul magnify the Lord, and thy spirit rejoice in God thy Saviour.

Yours, my sister, is a happy lot for ever. The afflictions of time are but occasions of your Lord's appearing more frequent and more precious. Nothing can harm you ultimately. All sorrows are yours with Jesus, and trials are mercies. You cannot have too good an opinion of your Lord or his dealings. His kindness is unfolded in all that comes to your door. The malice of Satan shall work for your good, through the hand of omnipotent grace. The highway to glory is evermore safe, though trying to flesh, and strong exercise for patience be found. Besides, it is very short, and tends to such pleasure as should make us think nothing of the heaviest crosses that lie in the way. And all who have journeyed from this world to glory have travelled the road in which we are now moving. For nothing uncommon has happened, as yet. And we must own that a thing may be very profitable which is very opposite to nature.

Reconciliation to our lot is an unspeakable privilege; and without a good measure of reconciliation no man can be happy, be where or what he may beside. For this may we ever entreat our most merciful Father, in the name of our most precious Redeemer. He who gave all the promises, can give every good promised. The Holy Ghost is engaged to maintain the work of righteousness for justification. Reconciliation grows from the root of spiritual love to God in Christ, as that love is possessed through faith in the perfections, purposes, promises, friendship, and all-sufficiency of God. May your heart be enlivened through the knowledge of faith, and your spirit resign all its concerns to a covenant God. Cast your care upon the Lord, for he careth for you. Commit thy way unto the Lord, and he will bring all things to pass for your good. His eye is every moment over the righteous, and his ear is open to their prayers. He is a present help in a time of trouble. Never was woman confounded that trusted in him!

This is a faithful saying, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners, yea, the chief of sinners. His blood cleanseth from all manner of sin and blasphemy. How suited to our case! Thus we can come to the throne as the chief of sinners, feeling little else than a sense of our depravity, and with our iniquity hanging about us, yet our dear Saviour declares he will not cast us out; the Father is well pleased with the sinner, in the righteousness and through the blood of the Lamb. Oh the preciousness of him who died to save! His name is a refuge for penitent offenders, and his kingdom a blissful home and rest for all the weary and heavy-laden, who trust in his meritorious obedience and death.

My dear Friend,—never expect what God has not promised; but aim to maintain due expectation of all he has promised. Never look for that in yourself which can only be found in your Lord, nor for that upon earth which can only be found in heaven. To feel your imperfection must be esteemed a favour, and considered as the consequence of living in the Spirit. You are not to rejoice in your imperfection, but in that you truly *know* it, and have good hope of the opposite through grace. The good of the kingdom is before you; look for great things! The subtlety of hell, and the nature and power of sin are against you; expect great opposition! your Captain has been victorious; you may anticipate victory!!

You have very few acquaintances: that is your mercy, for spiritual people are so very thin, that had you many acquaintances you would be likely to suffer loss by them; for to one spiritual sentence they would give you ten of a different nature, and thus you would probably gain a hundred and lose a thousand by trading. But you are where the Lord of wisdom placed you, and he will provide for you all necessary things, and as many friends as he thinks well.

But I must wind up my budget.—I hope Mr. T. continues to gather strength; it is a great affliction for him, poor fellow; but it is a mercy it is not worse; he is in the hands of God Almighty, his power is infinite, his mercy unbounded.—His will be done.

We are all mercifully well, God be praised. Present my best wishes to Mr. B., and others whom you may see, and accept the same for yourself and husband, while I remain

Your Servant in Christ,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 2.

TO THE SAME.

Sept. 1st, 1817.

My dear Friend,

You may suppose that I long forget you; but I frequently thought of you, with my other kind friends, when you had no means of knowing it. I yet remember the kind attention you often paid me when in the habit of visiting those places. Many changes we have seen since I first knew you, and many of our acquaintances are gone into the final state which God had eternally allotted them: we are spared a few days longer, our work is not wholly done, our sufferings are not wholly borne; when they are, we too shall be taken home, to our long home. By grace we are enabled to say, heaven is our chosen, anticipated, and wished for home. When a poor sinner is going to paradise, he is heard to speak of it to his friends, and is seen to look that way, and is found walking in the consecrated path which leads to that celestial habitation; his heart is caught up in the visions of faith, and his expectation hangs in the indulged bosom of his heavenly Father. His desire is to walk worthy of the high vocation wherewith he is called, and he wishes to keep the footsteps of the great Leader and his redeemed admirers. He is aware that this wilderness is a place of snares and pits, and is taught not to trust in his own skill, strength, or courage; he depends on the mighty God, nor is he disappointed of his hope; daily he deposits his valuables with his omnipotent and faithful Saviour, and feels confidence in their safety, and travels in good hope.

The religion of our Saviour is well suited to us as poor, destitute, helpless, guilty, and polluted sinners. It is designed to open to us a remedy suited to all our diseases; the Saviour's person is suited to the persons of his people, and his wonderful works to their manifold necessities. What forethought appears in the plan of salvation; how are the provisions of mercy adapted to the multiplied miseries of the remnant redeemed unto God! When we look at the wants of a guilty, condemned, and filthy sinner, we are ready to say, how shall his wants be granted and amply supplied? but when we look at the provisions of grace, then we exclaim, how superabundant! who can receive them all?

I fear you have to lament that you can attend the means

of mercy but little ; but, my gracious sister, it is your exceedingly great comfort that mercy can attend upon you. If God's beloved ones cannot attend the public watering places, to buy wine and milk without money, he will kindly send them a little without charge, to their private places, by such means as he can always command, or without means, if it seem good in his sight. He has upheld you for years, and is as willing and able as ever, for it is impossible that everlasting love should fail, increase, or decrease. He knew what it would cost him to bring you through the land of captivity and the vale of tribulation. We used to say of people who have great labour to perform, or great sufferings to endure, that they need good things to support them and bring them through ; well, so do the toiling and afflicted saints, and God will see that they live well, and have support according to their day. In extraordinary cases of trial, he will give uncommon succour to his people. He always has done this, nor will he fail to perform his promise to the end.

Remember the plan of heaven is, that you can live on your great stockholder, Jesus Christ. Lay hold on eternal life by taking hold of his atonement and righteousness. You may touch his garments by apprehending faith, and derive virtue in believing. May the good Spirit of all grace work in you to reveal Jesus, and bring your heart up to his throne of redeeming favour, and fill you with joy and peace, satisfaction and gratitude. I still remain

Your affectionate Friend, in the bonds of
eternal peace in Christ Jesus,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 3.

TO THE SAME.

Sept. 2nd, 1818.

My dear Friend in the Lord Jesus,

I hear by brother Freeman that you are still in the furnace ; I conclude therefore the Lord has reckoned it needful for you, and as he does not deliver you out of the trial, it is plain he intends to support you in it. This life is a

thorny maze, but God is able to bring his children safely through, and make their humiliation provide their real advantage and exaltation. His ways of providence are a great deep, but he knows the way through that abyss: what is to us inconceivable, is to him all plain and easy. He has helped you far more than half your way, he will not forget his charge, nor forsake his hand-maid. If your difficulties should increase, he will multiply your aid; for as your day is, so your strength shall be. This he has said, and thus he will do, for whatever he has spoken cometh surely to pass.

The Lord has done great things for you, and still loves with an everlasting love: your time is shorter, but then your heaven is nearer. Thus where sin seems to gain the most alarming victory over us in bodily death, we gain the highest advantage. When we are brought to the lowest place, we rise to the highest felicity. When to the natural eye we seem cut off from all things, we are then about entering on the inheritance of all things.

I sometimes call to mind the way in which my heavenly Father has led me through this wilderness, and then I think again of *Wilton*, amongst the rest of the places: I am reminded of the many pleasant and sociable hours spent with my friends, some of whom are on the other side of Jordan: while I continue still a pilgrim. Some, I fear, have shewn me favour, who never derived spiritual benefit by my ministry, though they often heard it. Grace alone can account for the success of the gospel. This is our comfort, and hence we are led to hope for certain effects, nor apprehend any danger of the elect failing to obtain their given heritage. They were secured before the plan was put into any open form for execution. Their life was hid with Christ in God, and their state determined by the sovereign God of all mercies before they drew their fleeting breath. The Holy Spirit comes into their hearts to make known their election and redemption. He testifies of facts and reveals secrets, and makes room for grace by the claims of justice, and fills the heart with peace through faith in the cleansing blood and justifying righteousness of Jesus our Head and Surety. You have long known these things, and they have often pleased and profited your soul. It is indeed the subject which the Lord God has ordained for the edification of his dear saints; neither is there any other topic on which we can dwell

with like advantage. I have sent you a sermon, which you I hope will read with some profit; and a pamphlet on sanctification. Express my respects to poor T——, if he can understand you, and

Accept my christian love,
JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 4.

TO THE SAME.

*July 30th, 1827, Upper Thornhaugh Street,
Bedford Square.*

My dear Friend,

All grace and peace unto you through the knowledge of Jesus Christ our exalted Lord, and by the Holy Spirit of our God. Years have passed by since you first confessed the adored name of Jesus, to be your only hope and foundation of confidence. He that gathered you to himself has kept you to this day, renouncing every dependence, but that of the love, merit, and power of Him that died to ransom, and lives to rule his chosen charge. God has helped us, my friend, hitherto; his arm is not weak, nor can ever be weary in supporting his chosen people.

It gives me pleasure to hear of my old acquaintance being upheld in their profession, and that their faces are still Zionward. Many sorrowful days, and many hopeful ones, have we seen. Our fellow-professors have dropped by our side, but we are left: I have long believed my happiest days to be past, as to this world, and hope the idea has tended to excite in me a desire to live in constant remembrance of my heavenly home; the exalted life of faith upon the Son of God, as our head of fulness and our everlasting all, is the only one that can fit our case. Here we are set above the malice of every foe, professor, or profane; here we have faithfulness itself engaged for us, and can place our confidence without suspicion, and indulge our hope of safety and joy without disappointment. This interest is permanent. Jesus is ever the same, and will in no wise cast us out, nor cast us off. The journey of life is mostly behind us, we have travelled the greater part of it; now is

our final salvation nearer than when we believed. Hope will soon in fruition end, and desires be lost in the fullest enjoyment. Our glimmering light will by his favour, I trust, speedily terminate in perfect day. What an empty, shifting, transitory, dubious thing is this world! how uncertain is human friendship! how often is it interrupted by persons and events that we had not looked for, as disturbers of our quiet, as hindrances to our enjoyment! Here let us ever adore the unerring and unsearchable wisdom of the God we worship; he ever has good reason for his measures, though we may be unable to discover them, and he may see it needful to reserve them to himself.

Could we see his ways in some respects we could not live by faith so properly, which apprehends divine things without pretending to comprehend them: his love passeth knowledge, yet it does not pass belief; his redemption is full of mystery, but we enjoy its reality, and find peace in believing, while the person of our Redeemer, the price of our redemption, and the glory to which we are redeemed, remain incomprehensibly mysterious to our contracted minds. Thus we take his word for the merit of the sacrifice and the certainty of its results, and we are upheld in believing that his blood cleanseth us from all sin, that his obedience entitles us to an honourable discharge from all guilt or fault, and we find peace in believing; and are helped to live and to die on the word and the worth of our blessed Saviour.

Conviction of sin, abhorrence of it, departure from it, dread of its prevalence over the mind, detection of its secret workings in the heart, watchfulness against it, repenting of the allowance of it, grieving for the tendencies of it, not having been duly watched against, desire for its crucifixion, for the pardon of it, and even for the total eradication of it, are things felt by the family of God; and have, my friend, I trust, been experienced by you.

The same Holy Spirit who has taught these things has also led you to the Sin-bearer, opened the fountain for sin and uncleanness, given you firm belief of its worth and virtue, and taught you to worship always by the One Mediator. Ever carry in hand that satisfaction of divine justice, that vast expression of divine love, that prevailing price of everlasting pardon, the unutterably precious blood of Christ. Hold up, and hold fast, put on and worship in

and by the transcendently excellent righteousness of the Lord Jesus; it beautifies the wearer, it dignifies him, it protects him, it entitles him to live for ever! this all-adorning and enriching gift can never be enough admired, can never be fully praised: in this arrayed, condemnation is impossible, Christ is endeared, servile fear is removed, courage is increased, hope is enlivened, holiness is promoted, and at last happiness is completed. This truly fine linen, I commend to you above all others, as cheap, fine, lasting, needful, unstainable, healthful, and as peculiar to the elect of God, being provided for the family of God. Rev. iii. xviii. xix. vii. viii. I hope to be thus clad in the great day of God. Accept my sincere love for Christ's sake,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 5.

TO THE SAME.

January 3rd, 1831,

Monday Evening, Eight o'clock.

My Dear Friend,

Grace, mercy, and peace, be with you always through the distinct knowledge of Jesus Christ our Lord, our hope, and our all. He is the life and strength of all the faithful, and I am persuaded he is and has been your hope through many past years of your shortening pilgrimage. Earthly friends wear out, but he is the same daily and for ever. And if our friends did not decline or die, we must; and therefore our portion, if suited to us as immortal beings, must be endless, and chiefly future.

Many of neighbours and friends are gone to their eternal state; we are hastening after them to the house appointed for all living. But the main point is to have a heart for God, and to take him for our God and our guide, even unto and beyond death. We know that if this earthly house of ours be dissolved we have a building of God, a home and rest in the heavens with Christ and his company. Now he that hath wrought us for the self-same thing is God, who hath also given to us the earnest of the Spirit, to witness our right, and to encourage our hope unto the end. The scrip-

tures refer us to three distinct states of being: Earth—Hell—and Heaven. In the first, we find both good and bad; in the second, we hear of none but the bad; and in the third, find none but the righteous. Nature brings us on earth; sin takes men to hell; Christ brings men to heaven. He is the Captain of our salvation, by whom God is bringing many sons into glory. God cannot fit men for hell, men cannot fit themselves for heaven. God permits sin, but he does not produce it; he always hates it, but he will not always hinder it; he can and does forbid it, and he can control it, and cause it to minister to his glory, contrary to its own nature and tendency: Acts ii. 23; Rom. v. 20, 21.

Man cannot prepare himself for heaven, but God can and does; he maketh men meet to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in light. The Holy Spirit comes from God to fit us to see and enjoy God. Our persons were made for him naturally, before we were fitted for him spiritually. His houses are built by him before he takes possession of them. In due time he ejects the enemy, and makes our hearts his own abode; then he fits us for the self-same thing: 2 Cor. v. 5; Col. i. 12.; Phil. i. 6.

He herein imparts the principle of all godliness, and raises us up to act for him, and gives us knowledge of himself, and admits us to fellowship through faith, hope, and love: 1 John i. 3; 1 Cor. i. 9; 2 Cor. xiii. 14; Acts ii. 42; 1 Pet. viii. 9. The next world on high is sinless and sorrowless, Rev. xxi. 14; therefore to be fitted for it we must be sinless too: now this can only be by grace and by being washed in the blood, and clothed in the righteousness of Christ, Rev. vii. 14; i. 5, 6; this is a chief part of our righteousness, or meetness for the better world. Covered in the best robe, the saints in Christ will have the best world; the best things are all given in and with Christ, and are made known in and with the Holy Spirit, who is given to all the heirs of salvation: Rom. viii. 32; 1 Cor. ii. 12. Besides, a blessed preparation for glory consists in a heavenly mindedness, for to be spiritually minded is life and peace; this appears in the thoughts and desires running upon persons and things that are above: Col. iii. 1, 2. The heart meditates on divine things with hope and satisfaction; the soul perceives the excellency of eternal things, and vents its longings after them, at the footstool of infinite mercy—it loves to dwell on the beautifying works and worth of Christ,

Making us for the highest world, God brings us to love Christ, to love his doctrines, to love his spiritual brethren for his sake in sincerity. His doctrines display his glories, and are therefore of the highest consequence to his friends. His words are dear to them, because they are his words, words which the Holy Ghost teacheth: 1 Cor. ii. 13. You have loved these things and these persons for many days and years.

I remember we have spent many friendly hours at Wilton, when your good brother used to be present, and others; they are gone, they loved right and hated wrong, they embraced the atonement we rely on. Blessed be God for past days of mercy, and friends on the road; may his presence still be our stay, soon, soon, soon, my friend, we shall be sent for; pray and wait, keep the end in view; offer thanks daily. May this new year be a year of mercies to you, so prays

Your sincere Friend,

JOHN STEVENS.

We live in alarming times, but the Lord is our help and our defence, our portion is safe: 1 Peter, i. 3, 5.

LETTER 6.

TO MR. THOMAS BONFIELD, (late of Chatteris.)

London, Oct. 4, 1813.

My dear Friend,

I hope you will believe me, that my not writing has not arisen from anything in me towards you, but rather from something in me towards myself. I am often fretting over my much work, and my small performances and advancement. I seem eager to acquire all I can, and yet I seem to resemble the sluggard too much,—I desire and obtain not. I experience many hours of disquietude, both from myself and others, and seem learning constantly, though slowly, that I am to cease from man, whose breath is in his nostrils, and whose mutability is daily manifested. I often express a wish to know more, whereas I have not practised the half of what I already understand. Corruption seems to beguile the mind, and often puts a cheat upon

the understanding, thus we are easily led to evil prejudices and erroneous inferences.

I had expected to have heard of the boasted achievements of your . . . champion before this time. What are you all at in the Fens? I understood the questions proposed were to be answered with the greatest facility. I know some injury must be done to consistency if it even be attempted. But why speak I thus? How can I tell what dire castigation may this moment be inflicted on sheets of paper? Time may show what it heretofore has not made manifest. There are, however, certain principles from which we are in no danger of being seduced or driven. By these it may please the Lord to guide us in the search of others more difficult. I heard you had not been used very well by your antagonists; at this I hope you felt no surprise, nor suffer any real or lasting discouragement. We enlist to fight!

I shall probably soon hear the result of things. I hope you are in good health with your spouse and family.

I have been taken up of late in getting possession of another meeting-house, which I expect to preach in next Lord's-day, in York Street, St. James's Square. I continue testifying the gospel of the grace of God, according to the measure of ability which God giveth: and truly that oft appears to me so small, that I can hardly compose myself in a tolerable degree under the sight. I have long found that the opinion of others, however favourable, though really pleasant at times, yet is no substitute for the witness of the Holy Spirit. But if the Lord will hide his face, I cannot behold him: though if he will smile I fear no evil; his gracious visitations uphold my spirit, renew my strength, confirm my hope, and disperse my fears.

The further I pursue the lines of heavenly wisdom, the more strongly am I convinced they run beyond measure. And how indeed can infinite designs be brought within the contracted perception of finite intelligence? that which I enjoy is infinite, though it is impossible for me to infinitely enjoy it. I worship the Eternal, yet am myself only the creature of a day. I receive infinity, yet not in an infinite manner. The great mystery of Zion's redemption, is of all mysteries the most interesting, as it affords to sinful man a view of eternal excellence, displayed in a scheme that both glorifies God, the author of it, and eternally saves man, the heir to it. Though men of learning, wit, and reason, con-

tinue to deride the doctrines of salvation altogether, I must ever be dejected and lost were I divested of that ground of hope I find in the one offering once offered. I oft remark that I am not conscious but what my conduct toward God and man, is as good as any of these gentlemen's is likely to be; yet to me there arises not the shadow of a reason for me to expect acceptance before my Maker, when the mediation of the Son of God is denied. But I have ever found that error, though opposite to truth, in one respect resembles it: that is, it hangs together, and one gross mistake requires the confession of another. Thus if I deny the authority of the law, I naturally divide the gospel. If I deny the defilement of human nature, I pay no regard to the doctrine of cleansing blood. If I am blind to the very great deficiency in my own obedience, I am sure to under-value that of Jesus Christ. If I exalt my own capacity to understand what is right and best, I underestimate the knowledge and truth of God. For it is a clear case that he who can live without God, will be sure not to humbly acknowledge him. It is by a real acquaintance with nature's poverty that a man rises to seek after the true riches. Some trust in their learning, some in their good doings, some in their good intentions, falsely so called, some in their prayers, some in their gifts, some in the high opinion of others, some in the idea that God means to save all, and that he is too merciful to punish any of his creatures, and some few trust in the Lord Jesus Christ. These last are sure to be esteemed fools by this world, but all the rest are considered wise men. It is my desire, however, in this case to be numbered with those who are "fools for Christ's sake." I must pray you to excuse my not paying the postage of this fragment, indeed I can't think it worth the money, but it may be worth more to you than me, besides, it is sent from London, and designed as a token of friendship.

Peace be with you,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 7.

TO THE SAME.

1817.

My dear Friend,

.... I feared when I heard of your going about to different places to speak, that you would go beyond your strength. Under your present infirmities I hope you will be careful as to taking cold, or making any exertion to irritate your debilitated frame, as it may be of great moment to your future life and relative connections. Your heavenly Father knows your infirmities, and that you would gladly spend and be spent in his cause, and that indeed you have spent the little strength you had in his cause, and more than that he never requires.

I hope the Lord will kindly direct you in future, and that you will have prudence imparted to act as I believe you wish to act. He is able, you are feeble; this intimates that you are to be and do what he pleases, and that you are to live and walk by faith, that is, in the strength of him in whom you believe.

Nothing uncommon has befallen you as yet, nor anything but what your merciful Lord will overrule for your benefit and his own praise.

I hope Mrs. B. will be upheld in spirit, to bear her personal and relative affliction. What a chequered scene this life presents between the cradle and the tomb! How are we tossed on rolling billows, even where we had anticipated the prosperous gale and gentle breezes. Man frequently elects the way he takes with one end in view, while his provident Parent secretly secures another end. We act voluntarily—he controls all connected things supremely, and secures our unmerited advantage and his own deserved praise. Happy, thrice happy, the man who has this wise God for his Lord and defender, his help and his portion. He may lose his health, his dearest earthly friends, his wealth; yea, a world may slide from his hold, but the Maker of it will still remain his all-sufficient heritage. Let his name be magnified, his honour sought, his praise sung, and his will be done; his people will never have cause to withhold their cordial and hearty Amen.

I do not pretend to say the following recipe will cure your infirmities of body, but the articles are very beneficial

to all who take them:—An internal application of Calvary's blood, a good piece of celestial bread, several draughts of living water, as much holy oil as you can obtain for nothing,—these things taken daily, unmixed with anything else, have a very beneficial effect both for health, strength, and spirits. They require the patient to deny himself of every opposite thing, and seldom have they a better effect, than when taken by the patient on his knees, and with an empty stomach; you will do well to get into the sun as much as you can, take an airing on *Calvary*, and spend a little time of an evening in *Gethsemane*, and of a morning it will be well to go up to the mount called *Olivet*. And observe as to your clothing, it must be *fine linen*, white and clean, and your outer robes must be washed in blood; and you will find it best before you lay down to sleep, to open your windows towards the temple of Jerusalem; the smell of *goats* or of *swine* will do you no good, but rather harm, therefore avoid them as much as possible. You may take a little rock-honey any time with great safety; you will obtain these things all at the same place, I mean at *Bethesda*; they are often to be had at *Bethel*, but you have a directory. I hope to hear you are better.

I remain your Friend and Brother,

1817, no date.

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 8.

TO THE SAME.

Oct. 14, 1817.

My Christian Brother,

I wonder how you get on—and if you say not at all, I yet wonder how you stand still. The world is on the whirl at its Maker's feet continually, and time is still flying with steady pace. Days and nights pass on, and many mortals are constantly making their entrance into our world, and many making their exit. The purposes of the Great Eternal are fulfilling every hour, and his precepts are as perpetually transgressed. His attributes are glorified by the acts which are designed to withstand his equitable claims; he permits the sinful traffic he prohibits, and secures a revenue of honour to his justice. The world

teems with life which he every moment succours, and abounds with vice he inexorably hates; men take liberty to sin, and he takes liberty to punish, or hold them over to a future tribunal. He premonishes them of their destiny, they laugh at his warning voice; he exemplifies by instances, they heedlessly pass them by. He declares his will, they dispute his right; he suspends the blow, they harden themselves in the sunshine of his forbearance. How few receive his name of the myriads that breathe his air! Still he is pleased to sustain them, and shew them many favours. He blesses them, they curse his ways, his people, and his providence. Why does he not end them? they exist for his glory, and are means of his honour without designing to any way illustrate his character, and contribute to his praise.

The religious world is a surprising compound. It is fraught with mystery, vanity, and contradiction: but there is something good in it towards the Lord God. The worst sins are found here, and here we meet the greatest real excellence. Here justice has her advocates and admirers, with every other attribute of uncreated majesty. Here the superior power of grace over that of corruption is daily illustrating, and life is banishing death. Depravity here displays its frightful and detestable being and influence, and here it is faithfully exposed.

Around the uncovered throne of mercy we behold a goodly number, bowing prostrate, deploring their evils, and beseeching the ears of God, for pardon, strength, and safety.

Some returned from riotous living, are employed in boasting of the condescension of God, and the virtue of Calvary's needful sacrifice; showing the super-excellent robe of righteousness, and the blood-washed garments of salvation. Some are entering Zion with trembling steps; others are marching out of her courts with a careless and hardened spirit, vindicating themselves, and malevolently reflecting on their more stedfast brethren. Some are anxious to enter the sacred office of the gospel ministry; others, dejected and pensive, are looking around to see how they can with safety, credit, and advantage, withdraw from it, often lamenting their present dear-bought experience and honour. While others, riding aloft on the deceptive opinions of mere breath-blown applause, are but

mounting to descend with more rapid pace. Others under weighty loads of sorrow, collected by various hands, from various quarters, sighing for help, with all the power of their patience constantly on the full extension. While others with scarcely sense of trial or difficulty, glide on life's slippery way, nor once suspect danger near, or a painful change to come and spoil their grateful pleasures.

But my pen has swept along with little thought that my remarks may have no near connection with the friend to whom I intend to direct this selected sheet. My brother, I hope you are well, and that you have gathered the fruits of your ground, and have reason to enjoy your toil in its fruits, and the various relative blessings that grow within your lot—another winter will soon salute your feelings, but what mercy has appeared for you, and stored your house with comforts. O what gratitude is due! Besides, you have hope beyond all winter and all want.

Express my christian regards to Mrs. B.: my love to Mr. and Mrs. F. I hope they are hanging on the bosom of mercy by faith. Their journey is of necessity very short now—O that they may feel the importance of a life of faith in Christ our Lord. The next is the best world, the present is a paradise compared with what we deserve.

I remain, as heretofore,

Yours in the grace of God,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 9.

TO THE SAME.

April 6, 1818.

Dear Friend,

I expect before this reaches you, you will have obtained a sight of a printed letter written in defence of the antiquity of Jesus. I hope you will not suppose it any mark of disrespect that I did not send a packet directly to you, for it was merely for my own convenience at the time, and I thought that you would be sure to receive a few copies by Mr. P. in a little time. I hope you are in good health, and enjoying the gospel you proclaim to others. I am as usual

both as to body and mind, except I say in the latter I have rather to lament a want of more sensible enjoyment, and am grieving frequently over the imperfection of my services in the cause of the Lord Jesus. I even find at times a secret wish I could be out of the ministry; but, alas! my restless heart would soon lead me to greater sorrow, were it permitted to dictate and determine. You are but entering the field, but fitting on the armour, and it is hoped you will wear it for years, to the benefit of many lost sinners, and the praise of their triumphant Saviour. A more important employment is not to be found under the whole heavens. O for grace to be found faithful and fruitful, humble and thankful. He who filleth all things, can fill the hearts and mouths of his ministers, and cause them, after sowing in tears to return with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them.

Now you *must be* a man of business, and it will be needful for you to be very assiduous to keep all your lands in good management, to sow good seed in good seasons, and with good hope, and then to wait with long patience for the desired harvest. You have now fresh reason for praying and thinking, groaning and grieving, fighting and enduring. For the work of the ministry God only can render any man truly sufficient; and it is our mercy he can qualify, guide, and uphold, through all toils, cares, perplexities, and straightening disappointment and sorrows. May the good Lord be with you, greatly to enlarge your thoughts, wisely to arrange them, pleasantly to convey them, and powerfully to apply them to your own soul, and to the souls of your hearers. Then you will have a door of utterance, and the truth have a door of entrance. Aim to dissect the hearts of men, and unfold the plan of grace. Be firm, faithful, constant, and observant.

Expect the hand of the Lord according to the promise of the Lord, and look to meet what God has foretold, nor seem surprised at what fulfils the scriptures, either in yourself, your friends, or enemies.

When my way will be open to see you I know not, but the Lord will be your strength and portion; to him I commend you, with him I hope to meet you. Dear brother, farewell.

Ever yours in the blessed Jesus,
JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 10.

TO THE SAME.

Friday Night, May 24, 1822.

My dear Brother,

I have several times thought of writing a few lines to you, as though they may contain but little, yet they may indicate remembrance and friendship. I have often thought of you in the passing time, but have no powers that qualify me to perceive where you are, nor how you are exercised. Yet I rest in this, our Father's eyes are upon us every moment, and he is able to see the movements of all his family. This renders him worthy of our religious confidence, and is suited to exalt his understanding infinitely above our own. It is knowledge too wonderful for us to have any adequate conceptions of it; but not for us to give credit to it and to adore that all-capacious mind, that never increases its knowledge, nor alters its ideas.

When we reflect upon the boundless excellence and perfections of our God, it is pleasing to remember that they are all engaged in securing the welfare, and perfecting the happiness of his chosen people. There is nothing in God's nature to harm his redeemed, nor any thing wanting to satisfy their holy desires, while we view his attributes, as the attributes of Jesus, and as harmoniously displayed through his person and performances. Interest in divine love is sufficient to secure us enjoyment of the divine character; enjoyment of the divine character must elevate ours. No religion can be profitable or true, that is not founded on the immutable perfections of God. God cannot be the author of undetermined events, or of unforeseen salvation. Folly has never marked his plans, nor has injustice distinguished his government. His arm is mighty; but not tyrannical. His anger is dreadful; but never unreasonable or unmerited. If his wrath be undeserved, it shall remain undisplayed. But no sin escapes merited punishment, whether it be pardoned or not: if pardoned, it is punished in another; if unpardoned, it is punished in the transgressors themselves. How inflexible is he in his rectitude! How sovereign in his mercy, and how prudent in all his plans! His wisdom ever shines in the fitness of his means to accomplish his ends: and in the timing and ordering of subordinate events. But what pride and mad-

ness appears in opposing him, as well as in presuming to amend his designs, and prevent them from proving abortive. He will work by means without depending on them. He will choose his agents without asking their permission to do so. He will do as much by his own instruments as he pleases, nor suffer them to rise above their own sphere.

His doing as he pleases, is no matter for regret; for he never can please to perform any unwise, unholy, or unjust thing. Then why should any honest christian be uneasy, since the management of all things is in such hands. Does he love wise measures? so does the Lord, and he never acts foolishly. Does the good man love righteousness? so does the Lord, in whose hands are all his affairs. How often do the godly forget the ground on which their happiness is built and secured; He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will. If so we may rest quiet, we may trust him; for his will includes his perfections, so that he cannot will any unbecoming thing: that is, he can will nothing but what it shall redound to his own glory, and the final benefit of his elect people. He ever keeps a good end in view in all he does, and requires us to do likewise. *Selah.*

I hope you are well in health, and your family also, and that Zion is in peace; that your soul is alive, contented, and grateful. If *farming* be a poor business, *preaching* is a good thing: 1 Tim. iii. 1.

Express my christian love to all friends. We here are much as usual, increasing slowly as a church, but still increasing, for I do not count them lost that are dead in Christ. I have not time for more; let me know how you do, and what is the face of things around. I remain, dear brother in the Lord, yours very truly in him of whom Paul said, 'Yet now henceforth know we him no more.'

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 11.

TO THE SAME.

March 24, 1824.

My dear Brother,

We have a good and understanding Father, whose arm is almighty to succour in every distress. It gave me plea-

sure to observe the composure of your mind, in the midst of your troubles, and that you could find a heart and a moment to think for Zion, though surrounded with causes for care in the objects of your natural affection. Your soul seems to feel her kindred to celestial persons and things; there is an excellency in supernatural things, in that they hold a fixed independency of terrene affairs. Physical decays are not moral deficiencies. Nature may reel, while faith stands firm as the sturdy oak of the forest, when greatly tried by agitating winds. An untried faith is unknown, as to its worth, and usually very feeble in its acts, and little seen in its effects. The trial of faith is the increase of patience, and extension of experience: Rom. v. 3, 5.

That all our destiny is in the hand of almighty friendship, is a consoling thought. What can He not do whom we adore? He cannot die. He cannot lie. He cannot deny himself. These are interesting denials of defection. From his inability, our safety arises to view. What then may we expect from his ability. He ever lives, he always speaks truth, he loves to defend himself. Then he will love to defend his family. His truth will be their shield and succour, and they shall ever live because their life is hid in him. Lord, said one, thou hast been our dwelling-place in all generations. Should the universe of creatures crumble to dust, or pass away in vapour, the Creator would still remain the unremoved habitation of all the just. The illuminated mind fixes its eye upon the first cause, and confides for safety in immutable things. True faith not only believes, but trusts its accredited object: its language is, "I am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against *that day*."

A noble assurance, at once doing honour to the Lord of life and glory, and shedding lustre on the believer's person, character, and profession. To think highly of our Lord, is to acquire dignity to ourselves: dignity of more value than all the boasted greatness of learning, wealth, or power. Earthly grandeur is but as the madman's crown of straw, when compared with the superlative blessings of interest in a redeeming God. This nature in her pride may question; but shorn of her transient ornaments, and falling by her weight and weakness, she must one day own her confidence deceptive, and her paradise only the Elysium of fools. What shadowy parading is every day flirting around! What hol-

lowness sounds in our ears; vanity is written on all this world! It is chiefly valuable as it is made subservient to the glory of God, and as it is the introductory way to the world of supernatural knowledge and joy. The family of God's love is here brought forth, nourished, and fitted for their celestial home. Here they are formed for himself, there they are exalted for ever with himself. This is our nursery-room, that our final mansion. He is pleased to set our affections on things above, before he takes us up to a personal residence there. Christ is the living magnet that mysteriously draws the minds of his chosen and redeemed members to that world where he dwells: Col. iii. 1, 2. His name is possessed of wonderful charms, and when revealed by the Holy Comforter in his own light, its effects are delightfully preparative for the personal interview which awaits the anticipating minds of elevated saints, in passing through this vale of distance, of frailty, of mercy, and of death. Mercy fits us for death, by coming before it, and death is mercy's porter to let the heirs of mercy into her more glorious apartments, and more extensive blessings, reserved for *the everlasting* into which time runs. O my brother! may grace, mercy, and peace, in the fulness of our Lord Jesus, be with you in every trying hour. We are born to go hence—may the riches of divine favour cheer our prospect, and invite our spirits home. Time's all—is not enough for immortal minds. They have an eternal cause, and need an eternal source of happiness. You have been led to worship in your representative. This leaves condemnation impossible; and evidences salvation permanent. Do all in him, for in him your life is hid, your fulness treasured, and your wants are anticipated. In him you meet a revealed God and Father: in him every attribute of Deity, every angel of heaven, and every office of the divine persons, is engaged in your favour. All the promises, and all the precepts, and all the providences, of a covenant God, are *for* you in him. Love him, trust him still, my brother; he ever liveth to make intercession; he will not forsake you. Accept my sincere love in Him, in whom, I trust, everlasting love has put us together: Isa. liv. 10; lxiii. 9; Job xliii. 15; v. 19; xxv. 28; xliii. 2; 1 Thess. v. 9, 10; 2 Cor. xvi. 18.

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 12.

TO THE SAME.

Feb. 22, 1825.

My dear Brother,

Grace, mercy, and peace be ever with you. This world is a confused place, yet is it a theatre of most important concerns, and being the elected nursery of the adopted family of God, and so the entrance into the ultimate regions of eternal delight,—it is worthy of our esteem and contemplation. Here the human family first began, here the nature of man once stood perfect, here human reason once adored its divine author acceptably without a mediator, here once the human will was free and faultless, here once a woman stood without a fault, a happy couple once lived here in perfect love and purity. Here the frailty of perfect creatures, secondly, was proved: woman took the lead, and man soon followed to his shame. Here sin entered and slew a world at once, and killed unborn millions in an hour. Death passed on all men,—here the first hint of mercy to the guilty dropped from the lips of the eternal judge; and celestial wisdom disclosed its dateless plan, of making malice honour mercy, and hateful vileness contribute to the open proof of the holiness of God.

Here Deity first dwelt in human flesh, and the divine Judge took the criminal's place. He that made man, here became himself a child, and made his mother of whom he was afterwards born. Here angels succoured him who upholdeth all things by the word of his power, and the life of the world died by the hands of those who lived in him. Here wicked hands wrought freely, and, without intending it, ministered to the memorable redemption of the elect world from all wickedness. Here he that had done nothing amiss, was put to death by those who had done nothing well. The worst of sins contributed to the putting of sin away. In the same event was found the greatest offence and the greatest satisfaction. A world where such things have occurred, is a place of some interest. Here the devil has long been made to labour towards the salvation of the church of God; the very thing which he has steadily intended to oppose.

This is I think an interesting world; some speak of it as if there were no good in it, but I cannot join them. Here

is continual bread from God's hand of providence for guilty millions. Here the lips of rebellion drink of the streams of insulted goodness every hour. Long-suffering kindness here displays its continued bounty, and long suspends the merited blow of punitive justice. When fire and brimstone might be rained on its devoted inhabitants, genial showers of refreshing rain are sent to nourish the plants of creation for blaspheming man. Every day repeats the mercy of the all-patient Father of all things, and long has he borne with the thankless. There is a day—the last day—the great day of God—the end of this world! all must see it—all must meet then. O, then! what will guilty sinners say in excuse? they have abused themselves, the subordinate creatures, and denied the Lord of all. What can they plead? Who can plead for them? Do they claim reason? to reason they shall go, and in reason be condemned. O my brother, what a world is this! yet it is our native place, it has been a world of mercies to us; it is still a land of blessings as well as cares. There is a better world—there is a worse.

Here God has a kingdom, an interest that rises nobly in the midst of ruins; a miracle of grace, a warning to all that stand by, an hieroglyphic of the divine mind in Christ. It is *in*, but not *of* the world, still it adds importance to the world, and is a main reason for its continuance. Herein the ignorance of the ungodly is displayed, they want the people of God out of the world; whereas, alas! poor souls, could they have their wish, their comforts would all be gone. They are blessed for Joseph's sake, but they know not the manner of God's ways.

This world is full of cares and many sorrows, but they are needful. Evil is restrained by evil; the evil of sinning is corrected by the evil of suffering. We may want our sorrows gone, but we know not what we want, nor what would be the consequence of having our wish. I have somewhere heard of a man who would have all the sparrows killed, but that afterwards he was so infested with insects that he was glad to restore the sparrow family to their places.

The next world is a different one—not mixed like this: there things are perfect, persons are perfect, suffering is not needful; there God himself resides without being confined there. There are many who never were born, and many who have been twice born. Many are there seated who never have seen the place, and they who have long

been there will soon have to leave it. This is the best world we have heard of. The good Lord bring us thither according to his word. You know the way, and there used to be a ladder at old Bethel, but I have not heard one like it in our parts. But we have a narrow way, which lies on the contrary side to the frequented and much approved broad road. Many have returned from the latter to the former, but none as I think from the former to the latter. I am, as I hope, in the narrow track, and have a directory and guard; we shall, I trust, meet in the city ere long.

Your tried and sincere Brother and Friend,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 13.

TO THE SAME.

July 18, 1826.

My dear Friend,

Though I hear not from you, I hope you are moving on to the centre of endless perfection, and that we are daily meeting in the worship of our God as souls can meet while their bodies stand apart, and cannot draw so near but by a relative union with their governing minds. We are here receiving fresh warnings to be ready to march at a moment's notice. We have buried three members, and another is now lying dangerously ill in a typhus fever. One friend was at chapel on the Wednesday, and the next morning utterly senseless when found in his bed, and a corpse in the afternoon, leaving *nine* children fatherless and penniless, *five* of them under eight years of age. How mysterious are the ways of infinite wisdom to us finite mortals! Why spare the aged, the helpless, yea, the insane, and take away the useful, yea, to our imagination, the *necessary*? God must regulate his conduct by rules that lay out of our sight. How fully it appears that we should trust in him, and not our own wisdom; that we should walk by faith, and not by sense.

There is another state and kingdom in which his wisdom is to be displayed, and his justice and goodness are more clearly to appear. This can only be an introductory state,

nothing here seems finished, darkness clouds the acts of providence, and crime *seems* to escape; the wicked prosper, and the just are trodden down. Folly is applauded and wisdom set at nought. Honesty hungers while villany is pampered. Servants are on horseback while princes walk beside them. The crow is on the pinnacle while the dove is obscured in the hole of the rock. Industry suffers want while idleness is full, and has even more than heart could wish. The praying seem disregarded while the blaspheming prosper and triumph. Reason alone cannot make these things straight—cannot see these things wise and just. But when faith surveys them in the light of revelation, in the prospects of futurity and the rights of God, all appear plain. See Psalm lxxiii.

I am much at a loss to form any idea of what is to be done with the land of my people, the place of the sepulchres of my fathers. How the Lord means to deliver us, who can tell? Ill tidings must be expected from the north—the great have been too heedless, but it is thought they begin to see with eyes of suspicion and alarm. Men will not starve without a struggle; and when to starve in hunger, or to die in contest for bread, is the alternative proposed, the fear of death loseth its force, and men become desperate. Religion here is the only healing remedy of the mind, and sheds a ray of hope through the gloomy hemisphere of dreadfully convulsed elements to all them that believe. I often think of the trying place that doubtless many of God's poor saints must be in amongst the thousands of embittered and enraged operatives who are breadless, comparatively at least, and see no prospect of better days. Trade is gone, confidence is in a deep decline. But still the Lord reigneth, the hearts of all are in his hand, the earth is his, he made it, and gave it to the children of Adam. He has promised bread,—the stupidity and selfishness of human governors cannot render his promises vain. He can render the confusion of men subservient to his own infinitely wise purposes. He can again bring bread without making windows in heaven. Blessed are all they that trust in him, let men act as they may round about them. Let the justified rejoice—the Lord reigneth.

I am much tried often in my mind, but not in despair; cast down, but not destroyed. I see but little of the Lord's hand amongst us for increase or activity. I, however,

cannot bless the word, that is not my prerogative. I hope you are going on as well as may be expected. We shall not long, my brother, have to do with this poor dying state. O that we may be made willing that the Lord should do as he prefers with us and ours. Why should we object? Who is more fit to be trusted? Who has equal right to rule? Who else dare we trust? What error has been detected in Him ever since the world began? Is he not our Father? Still he says, "Cast thy burden on the Lord." You are doing so daily, so am I, and yet I seem as if I had it on my own back. O how hard it is to believe practically, and make a friend of him *indeed*. God Almighty be with you, my brother, and with your correspondent; for his presence is life. Begging an interest in your prayers,

I continue in christian love, your true Friend,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 14.

TO THE SAME.

November 24, 1828.

My dear Friend,

It is long since I heard from you; whether I wrote last or not, I am not aware, but this is of no consequence. I hope you continue abounding in the work of the Lord, and are living the noble life of faith, the best life for a sinner to live, and connected with the highest prospects. That day is not well spent, in which *home* is not hopefully and gratefully remembered. Soon, very soon must we withdraw from the present transitory scene of things, and of this we are frequently reminded, by the departure of one friend and another, with whom we have gone to the house of God in company, by whose friendship the lagging hour has been cheered, and the path of duty and safety fairly pointed out. My old friend *Samuel** has entered on his immortal heritage; his family and his religious friends regret the loss. I doubt not, but he does *not* lament the change. Our brother Murrell will feel the stroke, though he has long

* Mr. Samuel Fairy, of St. Neots.

expected it. His influence in that little society has been sensibly felt, from the first formation of it. He was one of those few good men, who are destined to do good to the cause of Christ, without doing it any injury. These are rare characters among men—but I have found the old saying very true, “Every best thing is most scarce.” I dare suppose you have marked the same idea. It is true among animals, among inanimate creatures, among men, among saints; yea, pardon the adventurous thought, among ministers also!

But how great the favour, that the great Lord of all is pleased to send a few of his best things amongst us. To bestow himself, however, is the greatest of all his gifts. How are you going on at Chatteris? Are ye dwelling in peace? Are you striving lawfully for the mastery? Are ye holding fast that which ye have received? Do you love as brethren? Are you suffering injuries patiently? Is the honour of God more dear than self-gratification? Is Christ above all, and in you all? Then it is well—very well indeed.

We are as usual; . . . we are increasing in measure, but my harp is often out of tune—often I cannot sing to please my own taste at all. I am cast downward, and again I am restored and lifted upwards. I like what I cannot get, and get what I greatly object to meet with. My feelings vary, my faith yet stands *due east*. The Lord has done great things for me, but I am too often like a querulous farmer, (excuse my pertness) though most of the cropping looks well, yet there is a *bad* piece upon the farm, and he takes care to harp evermore upon this, and loses a useful remembrance of the many fine fields that demand his praise. I am not, believe me, my friend, I am not sketching your likeness, I am rather aiming at a profile of my own. Yet I should not wonder if some of my features were found in yours.

Wishing you every blessing of the Headship and Mediatorship of the Lord Christ, through the unction of the tabernacle, which the Lord pitched and not men; I abide, for Christ's sake,

Your affectionate brother, and fellow-labourer in the gospel,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 15.

TO THE SAME.

*Huntley Street, Tottenham Court Road,
April 13, 1830.*

My dear Brother,

I think perhaps I am in debt, and that you are waiting for my honesty to appear, before you transmit any more goods from the country. It is no atonement to confess verbally, and still add perseverance to negligence. Besides, I am selfish enough to wish to know how you are going on, and what new aspect is assumed by creatures and providences. Having long known you and others, and the neighbourhood, I am concerned in measure about how you and others are. The more likely way to set you to work, is to work myself: a short letter from me may bring a long one from you. I am much as usual, and we are much the same at our little Salem. Some friends are dead, others are coming to make up the number. Thus it will be with the militant church until all the ransomed of the Lord are brought in. He steadily pursues his object, whether we observe his regularity or not, and confused as are the plans of man frequently, his are in perfect order.

How are matters at your little place? Does there appear any increase of true spirituality among the people? Is there spreading the spirit of Jesus, our forgiving Lord? O how small is the progress professors make in the truly divine life of conformity to the holy pattern set before them in Christ! What unimportant possessions are strings of unexemplified sentiments! Truth is valuable in itself, but its worth is only experimentally known to us individually by its utility and saving tendencies and effects. Alas! my brother, I find my soul often very lean and dull. I might live without breathing as soon as live hopefully without Christ: He is my only, my constantly necessary support—on him, when my vigour is diminished, my dependence is placed for revivification. He is my righteousness, and therefore my strength; he is my fulness, whence all my wants must be supplied, and all my deficiencies perfected. It is my daily desire to be *found in him—to live on him—to be wholly devoted to him*, and to the *honour of God* by him. I continue preaching him as well as I can, but I am

often sorely ashamed of my work, and tempted to doubt the future help of the blessed Spirit, though his aid has been so often granted me. When his mighty influence is again afforded, I censure my hesitations as ungrateful, unscriptural, injurious, and wicked. Yet, after all, I detect myself at the same ill courses again. Sometimes I fear that a proud and selfish spirit lurks under some religious garb unseen, and that my great difficulty arises from my not having yet learned to be *nothing*. The lesson I have at times looked at, and thought I could really see its importance and utility, but I am scarcely initiated before I again forget what I intended, and I am again rising up into *something* ere I am aware. Again I learn that through not having become *nothing* I suffer great pain, I reflect on my folly, resolve to endeavour yet again, and seem to reap the benefit of my resolution, but find as often that my progress is much counteracted by my selfish heart—that I have sometimes thought I never shall be able to be *truly nothing* while life endures. Were I *nothing* how easy might I be under the censures of my *fellow-nothings*—to be overlooked by mortals would never hurt me, were I *nothing*.

Yea, the wise and merciful treatment of my God would then be borne without sullenness though severely felt, for I should be relieved by recollecting that I am *nothing*. “*Though I be nothing*,” said the renowned hero of the cross. Was Paul nothing? then I must be less than nothing, in fact; how ridiculous must I appear then, and how must my pride become my shame if I strut forth as an important something! Let Christ, let grace, let God be all, my soul,—be thou contented to be *nothing in thyself*, and *something only in Christ Jesus*.

Accept the true love of ever yours,

J. STEVENS.

LETTER 16.

TO THE SAME.

October 26, 1831.

My good Friend,

I know not whether you think me debtor, or yourself, but I am not willing to utterly neglect the customary and

long-standing manner of expressing christian friendship; and do hope that if you deem me guilty of remissness or negligence, that you will kindly remit me for our great Master's sake. . . . May his hand crown your efforts in union with your fellow-labourers, in the cause of eternal truth; eternal truth, I say, for the heavens will ever retain an exemplification of the gospel of endless love and absolute redemption. "For ever, O Lord, thy word is settled in heaven." I hope you are dwelling in peace among your own people, and that you are enjoying much in your soul, to bear you up in the cares and sorrows of this poor shifting world. O the unutterable worth of a prospect beyond this transient, retiring scene! He can do everything, whom we adore! In his hand are all the affairs of this mortal life; this is no small ground for hope and gratitude, prayer and confidence. But alas! what with the perverse ways of some, the fickleness of others, and my own faultiness, I am often not a little depressed. Again, I remember the case of David, and borrowing his language, and wishing for equal devotedness, with him I exclaim, in the trouble of my own conscious soul, "Why art thou cast down, O my soul, and why art thou so disquieted within me? hope thou in God; for I shall yet praise him," &c. His purposes are daily fulfilling, and could I but stand still without neglecting my duty, and be active without improperly intermeddling with his performances, I doubtless might reap the benefit of it. Duty often lies between two extremes, and the way but narrow through which we are to go; herein to march with steady steps and upright heart, is not always easy to one so frail as I. But the attempt must be made—duty calls—and necessity allows of no appeal against its decisions and requisitions. The Lord upholdeth all that stagger, and lifteth up all that be bowed down. My cry still is, "My hope is in thee." How sufficient is the Lord! how kind are his promises! how numerous his favours! and how suited to our need! But facts are admitted without question, when feelings are wanted to give us the enjoyment of them to our own profit, and to God's honour and praise.

What think ye of our prospect now? Watchmen, what of the night? Darkness seems thickening around in the aspect of our political horizon. "Notwithstanding they hearkened not unto the voice . . . because the Lord would slay them:" 1 Sam. ii. 25. "Then the prophet forbare, and

said, I know that God hath determined to destroy thee, because thou hast done this, and hast not hearkened to my counsel:" 2 Chron. xxv. 16. "But if ye shall still do wickedly, ye shall be consumed, both ye and your king:" 1 Sam. xii. 25. Are our rulers and people giving any reason for our thinking of such awful language? Either we must be a nation of complaining hypocrites, or our danger is imminent. The reins are thrown from the hand, until next year! Now if the horses be restive, as report says, where may we as a nation be next January? But why do I write thus? Jehovah rules the nations! Let the justified be glad. . . .

In Salem we look dull—but the Lord reigneth there. I thank you for every kind testimonial of abiding friendship. Let not even death dissolve it, O Lord Most High.

Believe me ever yours, in the Prince of our peace,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 17.

TO THE SAME: On the affliction of Mrs. B.

July 21, 1834.

My afflicted Friend,

In some respects I scarcely know how to address you, not knowing whether I am writing to a husband or a widow. In either case, however, I am writing to an afflicted and care-worn brother in the Lord, for whom I cannot but feel great sympathy of heart in the day of his calamity.

You know that the Lord whom you adore, is incapable of error in any of his ways towards you, nor will he; nor can he adopt any measure which is inconsistent with his love to his afflicted servant, or with his own character and honour.

You know that the events of your days are appointed by infinite wisdom, and must therefore be ultimately best. You do not wish to be indulged at the expense of his honour and consistency of government. You are aware that his views are more extensive than yours can be, and that *the whole* of every case is before him, so that he can form a bet-

ter judgment than you possibly can, who have but a very partial view of your own circumstances, and own yourself liable to form erroneous conclusions.

Whatever the Lord takes from us, he sees it no longer best for us to retain it, and if we entertain a contrary opinion to his, we are obliged to either clothe it with some false name, or else be ashamed to own it as ours. We talk of approving his ways, but he often places us where our sincerity must be put to the test. A trying providence is found to be a detection and developement of our real character. In many cases we rather *think* than *believe*, yet it is only by faith we can live. The enemy is crafty to magnify a possession, when we are called to resign it, and this he does for the wicked purpose of making us dissatisfied with the dealings of the Lord; for when he attacks *us*, his aim is at *Him* in whom we trust. To injure us by seeming to coincide with our wishes, and to feed our useless desires, that we may be the more tormented in having them denied us, is an artful scheme on his part, and one which at certain seasons, we are apt not to detect and renounce as it merits. Satan is an artful deceiver.

"*What is truth?*"—is an enquiry we have need to make at every turn, and to be extremely careful how we answer it. We impose on ourselves by giving undue representations of persons and things, and our unruly passions are excited by what, after all, is a false display. Our losses are generally magnified, and our injury is *greatened* unfairly. It is this erring manner of beholding things that occurs among good men, that promotes the bad feeling which, instead of being fed, merits abhorrence and starvation. Happy is that man, who condemneth not himself in that very thing that he alloweth. Remember, the enemy is watching you as he did Job—let him have nothing in you or your ways to gratify his devilish malice. The more your will runs into God's will, the better. You have no natural good to resign, which he did not first give you, and in these things you never become more than a tenant at will. How short is the time that any fearful event of this life can signify to you! Soon your present cares must cease; pray fervently, that they even now may be moderated.

Dwell chiefly on your mercies which yet remain, nor forget how long you have had them. You have no infant children to entrust to unfeeling nurses, that part of a wid-

ower's care falls not to your share. I am glad you can entertain a hope for your beloved wife. His mercy is supremely powerful, and he can save whom he pleases, and when he pleases. Nothing is more likely to help us against a tide of powerful feeling than the cheering thought that our dear friends have found death to be a deliverer from all their sorrows. My dear friend, I commend you to a faithful God; aim to conclude his will is wise and just, kind and good. His eye is upon you, he knows your every pang, and will help you. My kindest regards to your family.

Yours very affectionately,

J. STEVENS.

LETTER 18.

TO THE SAME.

Oct. 2, 1838.

My dear Friend,

Though hurried as usual, and doing nothing to any useful purpose, yet having opportunity of enclosing a note with the Hymn Books, I write to testify my friendship, hoping your patience, as heretofore, will bear with my negligence as a correspondent. I have nothing to impart of a circumstantial kind, I expect, but what you know. We are still at peace. I have been very unwell at times of late, but am thankful to have reason to say that I am better, and as well as I can expect to be in this old house that I have occupied as a leasehold now above sixty years! In truth, I know not the length of the lease intended for me by the owner of the premises, but I expect that as soon as the main parts of the building give way, I shall be obliged to quit, it may be at a moment's notice, or it may be after lengthened warning. I am often doing trifles to the old place, being rather partial to it than otherwise, and having been born in it, as we say, it seems very natural to do what one can to prop it up to the last; and knowing I shall be obliged to leave my native country for an untried one, whenever I quit, it will not surprise you to hear me say how much I have been inclined to favour it, and to think about as well of it as I fairly could. Indeed, it is only truth to say, that it has proved, as the saying is, a good, strong-

built house; stronger than many that have been erected of like materials. But years have altered it in many respects; the windows, for instance, have become less clear, and so much bedimmed, that I have been obliged to have them artificially glazed, which, however, is not needed except when I want to see *small* things through them. These artificial helps are only used on the *front* of my house, by jointed suspenders, so that I can easily remove them at my pleasure, which I regularly do in the night, when I lie down to sleep: nor do I ever feel the want of them except when my eyes are open. All this, I dare say will appear to you, my friend, very credible. Other parts of my long-standing dwelling, are useful to let in sounds, which they do I think as well as ever, which is a great advantage to me, though I have no method of excluding unwelcome sounds, except I can get a sufficient distance from their causes; and if I shut my windows, it does not seem to keep out the sound at all. However, I wish to be very thankful that those inlets, which you understand are on each side of the upper part of my house, are of vast comfort to me, and yield me a vast deal more pleasure than pain. You may wonder at my speaking of getting at a sufficient distance, as if my house were upon wheels, which I assure you it is not, but I can move it with tolerable ease, on two jointed bearers, although it is rather a weighty concern, and rather more difficult if I have occasion to move it up-hill, or against a high wind. Since it has gotten older, I fancy I feel more difficulty in moving it than I used to do; but I imagine some of my neighbours experience a measure of the same difficulty. And I must tell you, that the owner, who put me into it, very soon after, licensed it as a place of worship, and for many years now has very kindly entered the inmost parts of it himself, and has recorded his name therein, and put some new furniture into the attic, and all the principal apartments; so that I have long enjoyed more comforts than many of my countrymen, though their tenements stand on the directly adjoining site of ground.

The subject I fear will be tedious to you, or I might go on to tell you, that two swinging instruments are fixed to my old house, on either side one, which are of wonderful use to me; being made of joints and of easy movement, I can reach the top of my house by them, and not unfrequently take off and put on again, with the greatest ease, an artifi-

cial covering which I have to fit. This I remove always in the night time, without any inconvenience. The highest part of my residence being of a globular form, you of course would expect the covering to be so too; but this is not the case throughout, for it more resembles a middle-sized umbrella, or if you could suppose a half-peck measure to have a wide rim affixed to its upper edge, and then turned up-side down, it would give you the notion more closely, only observing that I ever get it to be as black as possible. My house top used to have growing upon it naturally a hairy kind of substance, which seemed to be a little ornament to it, as well as a fit covering for it; but latterly it has become bare at the top of all, and as the growth aforesaid only now appears on the sides of the upper hemisphere of the globular top, so, besides, you will please to understand, what of this natural covering continues to grow has quite changed its appearance into a grizzled aspect, and I think if my house stands long it will turn white. I am expecting, however, it will not stand much longer; but my good Landlord has promised me that he will rebuild it the next time he comes into our low country, and make it better than it was at first. Its material is to be entirely refined, and he says it shall be made like the house he lives in himself. Now he is very rich, and being king of the high country, he has power to do just what he pleases; so that I have good hope that, after all the trouble of moving, and of passing over Jordan, and through a dark valley, which is but short, I shall be bettered by the change.

Do pray excuse this account of your friend's old house, and still believe him, till he *flits*, obliged by hearing from you when opportunity is afforded.

Hoping *your house* is repaired in measure, and that you are enjoying friendship with him who built it, to whom I know you feel yourself indebted. His outlay has been great, and his tenants knowing they have a good Lord, cannot grudge him his due revenue, though they are always behind in paying.

Ever yours, and under like obligations,

JOHN STEVENS.

From my old house, a little way from Bochim, in the valley as you go to Salem.—Farewell.

LETTER 19.

TO THE SAME.

*On the subject of his approaching Dissolution.**July 24, 1839.*

My esteemed home-going Friend, in heavenly interest and immortal hope : God be with you.

I had expected, by the reports that reached me, that you would have been beyond the reach of communication by post before this day. So peculiar is your case, that I am now imagining that perhaps I may see you again in this vale of tears and trials. I trust our tender-hearted Saviour is with my tried friend in the last stage of his journey, and that as the sun of life is fast going down, and the shadows of the evening are lengthening, he is serenely expecting that blessed hope which is reserved in heaven with Christ, the Lord of glory.

It appears evident that all the family of God are taken into their final heritage on the same sovereign ground, but the circumstances attending their journey through this valley are exceedingly various. Why this is the case, we can but little understand, beyond the evident fact, that it is the will of God that so it shall be. There is only one mediatorial way to our final rest, but the methods of divine providence how various ! How unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out. While his providences are mysterious, his promises are plain ; and while we cannot trace his footsteps, it will be our mercy to trust his character. His promises provide for death as well as for life ; and multitudes have found them sufficient in that important hour. As we can only live by faith, so on no other principle can we die. On the undeceiving word of our God and our Saviour, must we depend ; and is not this a blessed institution of heaven, that by our simply believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, as the end of the law, for our justification, we should find liberty, joy, and peace ? " Be not afraid, only believe," said our Lord to the ruler of the synagogue. In this manner has the Lord determined to rule the hearts, and form the characters of his new-born people. And we are told that those who *lived* by faith, also *died* in faith, having obtained a good report through the same principle and exercise.

Christ is our great salvation; but he is unseen, except spiritually by faith. By faith he is made present to us, and we are caused to love him with a love of submission, reverence, obedience, and thankfulness. In a day of entire helplessness, how suitable to our case is a ready-wrought righteousness, and a fountain opened for sin and uncleanness. They who appeared before the eternal throne, are said to have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb; and therefore are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple. But as there is no night there, it must signify that they serve him continually. Neither is there any temple there; for the Lord God Almighty, and the Lamb are the temple of it. Christ is the meeting-place of all spiritual minds, and all come to God in him. The heavenly church is come to God, who is the Judge of all, and to Jesus Christ who is the Mediator of the new covenant. "To him," said Isaiah, "shall men come." To him, my friend, *you are come*—on him your mind has been long set, as your *Priest*, your *Pattern*, and your *Perfecter*. He has left your last enemy void of power to harm you. The *sting* of death is removed, only the *stroke* remains, but this is enough to make our nature shudder. Flesh and blood can never help a rising reluctance to be dissolved, but the enlightened and heaven-born soul looks forth from the windows of mortality, in living hope of a sinless and unsuffering state of being, where the great Redeemer dwells.

The Lord's elect are *called* to eternal glory, and their thoughts are taught to soar above, their *affections* are set on *things above*, which are *prepared for* all that *love* God, *follow* Christ, *love* his imitators, *trust* in his merits, *relish* his doctrines, *walk* in his steps, *rejoice* in his exaltation, *bear* his image, *breathe* his spirit, *receive* of his fulness, and *wish well* to his cause.

These are all exemplified in my tried friend, and hereby his future well-being is pre-signified. He is on his way to the glory of the Lord, which preceded the cross of his ignominious and heaven-procuring death. Satan will, if he may, assault you, and not let you escape from his boundaries without casting at you his fiery darts. You are advised to take the shield of faith, and stand fast, being strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. May the light of heaven shine on you at the banks of the Jordan, and the

Holy Comforter sustain you through all the way, till in heaven you take your place as an heir of God through Christ.

Accept the love of yours in Jesus,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 20.

TO THE SAME.

The last Letter.

August 9, 1839.

My redeemed Brother,

On the banks of the Jordan long a resident, you have opportunity of marking the emotions of an enlightened mind in such a station, and of marking also the fitness of gospel discoveries to a mind about to leave its native clime, for an unknown and untried region. Here we are wholly cast upon faith in the record, and confidence in its sublime author. We are called, like Abraham, to go forth into a place which we are to receive for an inheritance: John xiv. 2, 3. May we like him *obey* the heavenly call, though like him we have much to learn, as to the end of our way. Our ignorance is very great, as to the future, but we know *who hath called us*; and on his character and care we may safely rely. We know not many of the inhabitants of the heavenly state from any past acquaintance; but we know *their characters* on good authority; and this is sufficient for our present direction and encouragement. We have the names of several of them; and although we cannot be sure that they are so distinguished in the upper world, yet it appears very probable that they may, and we are sure their religious titles are retained in the highest exemplification. This connects them with us, and this is involved in our present meetness, Col. i. 12; 2 Cor. v. 5; for their society. We cannot but be happy where love reigns absolutely, and God who is love, is ever present.....Your thoughts have been taught to soar above, where happy spirits be—you have received the undeceiving earnest of the Spirit, and had some heart-stirring glimpses of the glory of our blessed and adored Lord. Your filthy garments have been taken away, and heavenly coverings have been received: these you have

worn for some years, and have been anxious to commend them to others. In the garments of salvation, I am sure you are ever desirous of appearing, and in them no man can be in danger of the second death, which seems to denote a second condition of life and consciousness. They who appear before the throne, are clothed in white robes, and have left their tribulation for ever. They are in purity, what the blood of Christ spiritually applied to their case, has made them to be.

There is only one thing you know that God *hates*, that, I believe, you have protested against privately and publicly for some years; but, my dear friend, this cursed foe is still mighty, though your outer man is feeble; and the old black Prince is ever on the watch to work by it, and if possible, by it to cut off your communion with Immanuel, our beloved and righteous Prince. Every saint dies a sinner redeemed by blood; the price of your freedom is the fullest expression of heavenly love; and leads us to believe through all contradiction, that none *so* ransomed can ever be resigned, consistently with the justice and grace of our sovereign God.

Once more, my old friend in Jesus, I affectionately say farewell, hoping to meet you in the world to come, where the spirits of just men made perfect dwell.

With thanks for the many kindnesses I have received under your roof, I sign my name,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 21.

TO MRS. PLAYER.

July 13, 1818.

My dear aged Sister, by the will of our heavenly Father,

Perhaps you have begun to think it time that I should fulfil my promise, and write you a letter. I have several times thought so myself, but have been much engaged in writing. He has chosen to put the gospel treasure into earthen vessels, that the excellency of the power may be proved to be his own. The glory of saving a sinner is too great for any mere creature; it is the right of God, and he will have it surrendered unto him, neither will he consent

to divide the honour between himself and the creature—he will have all, nor is less than all his due. His wisdom contrived, his grace bestowed, and his power applies the great salvation which is in Christ. He is the Head of our treasures, and the fulness of God that filleth all in all. He is made all, that his members should never have occasion to wander. Were he not ALL in himself, he could not be all to us, and were he not all to us, then we must have something besides him. But we have nothing more than Christ, and thanks to the Comforter, we can rest satisfied with nothing less. We must have him as the end of the law, as the fulness of the gospel, as the basis of the building, and the root of the family, the bread of our table, and the covering of our backs, the breast-plate of our bosoms, and the life of our hearts, the price of our freedom, and the pattern of our conduct.

This everlasting Christ is like the bright luminary of the firmament, he casts a lustre on all around, and shines without our permission, nor is liable to any hindrance by our negligence or our opposition. He is the supreme ruler of the gospel day, and scatters darkness while he shines with unequalled lustre according as the eternal mind ordained. Hence we derive what light and glory we possess, and the transforming rays declare we are not of the night, but are children of light, even of the day. What sin-subduing and soul-sanctifying light we have in Jesus shining in us, and creating in our hearts some sweet, though faint resemblance of his own spiritual image. This amazing Christ the Holy Ghost delights to magnify in the thoughts and affections, the words and actions of all elected men. Here is faith's true object, and the soul's true centre. Here the Father provided and promised all, and here all who are taught of God, expect and look for all. This is the true tabernacle, the habitation of Deity, and the representation of the church. Justice and mercy here meet, and sin and sinners here part. Here heaven opens, and through the opening the righteous enter in.

This Christ in *overfall* grace condescended to become Jesus in *underfall* settlements of redemption: this Jesus became a suffering victim for sins long past when he died, and long future too. He stretched his arms of mediatorial authority and power, and comprehended his whole church and all its concerns when he hung on the tree. He saw

the cup, he felt the awful power; but though he owned his weakness, crying, "if it be possible, let it pass," yet he proved his ability when he finished the work, and left his weakness on the field of victory. *He lives*, nor has death any more dominion over him. *He lives for us*; then we shall never die, though we pass the gloomy, harmless vale of the shadow of death.

Yesterday was our quarterly meeting: I read Psalm cxxvi. 3, and made some remarks on circumstantial things, as exemplifying the words, and our right to adopt them.

I have received in the seven years 294; baptized 203; dismissed and separated 42; and 13 of those received have been removed by death in good hope. My paper is full. Mrs. S. is still in the body, and suffers much.

Accept our christian love,

J. & M. STEVENS.

LETTER 22.

TO THE SAME.

August 26, 1822.

To Elizabeth, well stricken in years, the sister of Mary, the mother of our Lord, by the father's side, and predestinated heiress of grace and glory: grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied by all means.

Dear Friend,

I have had you in frequent remembrance, through the period of your absence from my sight, and among my prayed-for charge you have not unfrequently been present to my mind at the seat of everlasting mercy. We are going on as usual here, and the friends are, mostly, as when you saw them. The Lord is sometimes kind to show himself; and at other times, though present, we have very little sight or sense of his gracious nearness. We then seem like the face of nature, when only illuminated by the *unwarming* reflections of the moon and stars. Our views are less distinct, our spirits less elevated, our enjoyments very contracted, and our affections are scarcely moved. But I trust we are a little benefited, even through these clouded hours, for we seem thus to be fitted for sunshine, and taught to

distinguish it more clearly, and to prize it more gratefully. We are much affected by contrasts, and profited by changes: indeed, we are profited by *all* things, though we often cannot perceive *how*. It is the fact, however, with which we are concerned; it is the fact which is revealed; and the fact which we are to believe, and by which we are to be benefited. Where revelation stops, our enquiries are bounded; all beyond was deemed by infinite wisdom unnecessary to be known in this world, and not requisite, either to our happiness, or God's honour. It is one of the follies of our nature to neglect what may be known, in seeking after what the silence of revelation warns us cannot be known. The mysteries of the kingdom are incomprehensible in their nature and measure, but they are revealed as to their reality. *The Word was God; the Word was made flesh.* These are truths, therefore I believe them, and that because they are revealed as such. But the mode of our Lord's being is *not* revealed; it is not my duty to believe where I have no testimony. Where I have no belief, I have no knowledge of God and supernatural things. The wages of sin is death—eternal death. This is God's testimony, therefore I believe it. My knowledge of this subject, then, is *believing* knowledge, is derived knowledge: it is like that of a child who only knows that a thing is this, or that, because his father has told him so. If his father be wrong, *he* is wrong: but I am not afraid to rest my judgment on my Father's, for his wisdom is infinite, and his truth is eternal, neither is it possible for him to lie.

The blood of Christ cleanseth from all sin. This is an apostolic testimony; it must therefore be true. Believing it cannot *make* it true, nor can denying it make it false. *How* such effect attends such a cause, I know not, nor is that knowledge needful; but the fact itself is very necessary to be known, and this fact I believe and enjoy, to the creating of peace in my conscience.

The measure of my Lord's suffering, I know not distinctly; but the reality and cause of it I do know, and this is all that I need to know; and with this knowledge I am led to prize and trust my Saviour. Herein is the highest love, and the strictest justice displayed. But how surprising a Person must that be in whom infinite wisdom and sovereign goodness could confide the eternal safety and honour of the whole elect world; whose humiliation to a

temporary suffering and ignominious bodily death, could deserve the everlasting life of countless millions in the very presence of divine holiness. His purchase will for ever endear the name of *him* that made it. It will for ever reflect honour on the *purchased*: they must have been dear for whom so great a price was paid. They must be safe also. All, all the attributes of God arise to advocate the cause of the interested objects of the ransom. Nothing can be allowed in the creed of a wise man that would tend to reflect dishonour on the divine perfections. Who that believes and pleads the Mediator's blood can well suspect his forgiveness and acceptance? A Saviour's blood has engaged divine justice to appear the sinner's advocate. And if justice *can* plead for me, justice *will* plead. O holy scheme of salvation! worthy of God! worthy of praise! You are with me *in* these things; with me *by* them; with me *for* them: we are, I trust, bound in the same bundle of life with the Lord our God. I hope you are stayed upon Christ for every thing, and find your spirit resigned to whatever can belong to you in Christ. There is no harm in him, nor any want of any good in him: there is justification in him, and *there* you will find it of grace, works, and faith. Accept my christian love for Christ's sake,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 23.

TO THE SAME.

1824.

My dear Sister and well beloved of our Father,

You well know that our relationship is of eternal date, considered in a decretive point of view. In regard to our open birth-state in this low land, it has had a beginning, though from its highest cause, it can never have an end. This earthly residence was elected for our birth-place and nursery; but as our Father is in heaven, so we are destined to reside there, as soon as our time-concerns, and the pre-determined ends of our present being are accomplished. Our family interest is heavenly in its origin, and only in the heavens can it be fully consummated. But we are

children now, and in point of *relation* we shall never be more in the upper regions. The time of our being ordered home is fixed, though our kind and adorable Father has not said *when* he will send for us: only he has assured us the time is *certain*, and our removal *sure*. Our inheritance is ready to be revealed to us, and safely reserved for us in the heavenly country. So our brother Peter said before he went home, and he assured his friends that he spoke as he was moved by the Holy Ghost. The same blessed Spirit is kind enough to come down hither to be a witness to us of this blissful prospect. He knoweth all our Father's mind, and makes intercession in our hearts according to the electing will of God our Father, and in agreement with the meritorious interposition of our dear Elder Brother; to whose lovely image we are predestined to be conformed. This is all surprising grace, and grace displayed righteously too. It has often filled the very angels with desire to look into the manifold wisdom displaying in the salvation of our family. They never saw so much of God before the deep designs of sovereignty began to open through the ineffably glorious person of Immanuel, and through the most interesting events of his humiliation in the manger, on the cross, and in the sepulchre. When their divine Lord became a servant, they still ministered unto him; when he died, they watched his victory over the powers of darkness; when he rose they attended his sepulchral lodgment, and declared him risen; when he ascended openly, they were there for his honour, and to assure the disciples that they should see him again. The same angels are engaged in office for us, my sister; they will seek our good for their Master's sake. Our Father's sons are his heirs, and to them his angels are ministering servants. Are we the care of Father, Son, and Holy Spirit! the care of angels! whom have we to fear? What shall harm us? Who are our enemies? Not the holy, not the wise, not the just, not the good. Then all must be well at last: all is well now; the Lord is our defence.

Purposes, promises, perfections, and precepts are all for our welfare. Sin is in us, but it is only as a condemned felon in Newgate, there kept for a time, to be shortly dragged forth for execution. The devil is against us as an accuser, but the old creature has no new accusations to lodge, that our Deliverer has not answered for already.

Who shall lay anything to the charge of God's elect? What has not our Father *seen*, and our Saviour *borne* away in death? You, my dear aged sister, will soon get out of bow-shot, your days are now, from nature, only few; you may say, "These light afflictions, which are but for a moment, are working *for me* a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory." If your very trials are working *for you*—if the Lord of glory has worked *for you*—if time is flying on *for you*—if Christ is interceding *for you*—if thousands of saints are praying *for you daily*—if all things are yours, and are working *together for you*, what can you need, what can you wish for more than the continuance of your privileges, and the conclusion allotted for you by grace in glory? You must be, as we say, well off, and you may say, "Bless the Lord, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits."

You have your *BUTS*, however, I dare say; the Lord help you to regard them as *empty* ones. You have your trials where you might have expected your comforts. It is God's will it should be so, or he would hinder it from being so. If he do not arise to obviate your trials, he will appear to support you under them, bring you through them, and make them useful to you. God knows *how* to deliver the godly; state your case, surrender it, urge it humbly, pray for your enemies, judgment is the Lord's. You have one mantle that will never wear out, one friend who is ever the same, one door that none can shut, one prospect that ever remains inviting and permanent. Look up, look on, look homewards, look to Jesus, *He is all*.

I am your affectionate under-shepherd,

By order of him that ever liveth,

J. STEVENS.

LETTER 24.

TO THE SAME.

Sister Elizabeth,

..... We are going on as usual, we have got Salem's walls and entrance beautified, having fine iron gates in the court, stone floor to the passage, a new door in the centre, new cushion to the pulpit, which pulpit is finely grained

mahogany colour! In a word, for this subject demands brevity, we are very decent indeed in appearance; every one says so! . . . I forgot one important thing in our alteration; we have a new desk for the clerk, under the front of the pulpit, painted like the pulpit, that moves under the pulpit when not wanted. Pray excuse this wooden tale!

. . . . My fancy seems led to the singularity, in one sense, of your *name*. It would be ill with you if the heavenly register were not more extensive than the Bible; for I find only *one* Elizabeth in the latter, and I am sure that does not mean my friend at Walden, for she was the mother of the first Baptist. This, however, will serve to hint that you may be of her kindred in one line, for you are as really named Elizabeth as she was, and perhaps more of a Baptist than ever she was. We are not told that John baptized his mother. The name may be explained as signifying, either the *Oath of God*, or, the *Fulness of God*. Each gives us something to remark. You are taken into the covenant of the Holy One, I trust, and have worshipped therein for many years, and are a witness of the fulness of God, yea, in one respect a *part* of his fulness, even the fulness of him that filleth all in all.

What a surprising idea, that a poor helpless woman in Essex, should be interested in the oath of the covenant of redemption, and thus become a part of the fulness of the sworn Surety and High-priest of heaven and earth. O, Elizabeth! you may indeed exclaim, "The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places, yea, I have a goodly heritage:" Psa. xvi. 5, 6.

The only Elizabeth mentioned in holy writ was of the race of the priests: Luke i. 5. Here you come in again, for by being adopted in the first-begotten of the Eternal Father, and his being sworn into the priestly office, you become of the "royal priesthood," and though of the female sex, you are not only permitted, but ordained and enjoined to worship among the brethren; only your offering is purely spiritual, and chiefly belongs to the altar of incense.

I read that the ancient Elizabeth was righteous, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. This connects the name with a most honourable character. As you have the *name*, I also trust you will do your best to possess the *character*. God has helped you in time past to imitate your sister's conduct, his grace is suffi-

cient for the future. Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Ghost, and with his ordinary presence and blessing, I believe *you* have been favoured. All the Elizabeths are not so blessed. How great is the grace, my sister, that God should have remembered you above so many, and not only have assigned you the *name*, but sent you the things connected with it in his word.

Goodness and mercy have followed you all the days of your life. Let his praise be your employ, his arm is a sure defence, and his word and oath are to afford you strong consolation Christ is set before you all through the wilderness, he is in heaven before you, he is in heaven for you, he is a Saviour still, his heart is still on earth with his following Elizabeths, and all who are made his official charge Esteem these lines as intended a mark of friendship, and trifles may shew respect.

I am your sincere friend,
and affectionate pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 25.

TO THE SAME.

*Buckingham Place, Fitzroy Square,
Aug. 16, 1826.*

My dear aged Sister, in the line of eternal adoption, commencing in the first-born of every creature, who is the ordained Head and Root, Foundation and Fulness of the one Family of God,

All grace and peace, in all relations and operations, be with you from the midst of the throne of the Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God Almighty, through the Mediator, who was dead but is alive again. This is he whom, we, my sister, adore, admire, extol, pursue, and hope shortly to see for ourselves, to be like him, and be with him, not as visitors, but as joint heirs and everlasting partakers of all the rich treasures of grace in glory. We hope, we pray, we count of this; and what is well for us, *he expects us* as the objects of his mediatorial charge, John xvii. 2, 6; and of his mediatorial purchase. Herein is love immense and

immutable. Herein is justice unbending and impartial, maintaining its rights, nor once admitting more to be demandable. If sovereignty and justice join to save us, what have we to fear? I had need to be guarded, however, against introducing any troublesome agent into your presence, for fear you should employ it in your private apartments, one of whom you would be ashamed in public. I allude to "Serjeant Ir" in the preceding sentence. Few hacks get more work, and few leave us more pestered, and needing of help. I have seen him on your premises officiously busy, that you could not sometimes take a pinch of snuff *comfortably*, through his useless interference! But you will think me too merry,—well then, leaving "if," we say, *since* sovereignty and justice, unite on one side, of whom shall we be afraid? We are walking by faith, and therefore by the light, and under the protection of our great and exalted Head. He is our strength, he is our very life, our given, our sure, our endless life. Do not we treat him as such, trust in him as such, and as such live by him. He that eateth me, said he, shall live by me. He does not say *perhaps* you may live; oh no; he says, "because I live, *ye shall live also*." O blessed word, *ALSO*!—not without him, but *with* him, ever with him—there are no old women in heaven, oh no! youth and duration, immortality and joy are ever there!

Now don't you go and say that I declare no old woman can be saved. I have not said so—old age belongs to the body only, the soul is immortal, and as young in vigour, after acting for a century, as when at first produced, and the old body shall be worked over again, and be quite young in the bright morning of Jehovah's appearing, and frailty never returns. Then what surpassing beauty you will wear, and with what surprising agility you will move, filled with the radiance of the celestial sun, you will shine as the stars of the firmament, not for seventy years, but, for ever and ever. Thy sun shall no more withdraw itself, thy poor head shall ache no more under a long sermon about the antiquity of the Man in the Godhead! O no! sister Elizabeth, he will never appear *too old* for you, never appear too far from you. But we *may* have opportunity of dwelling on that sublime subject in the world of perfect knowledge; there we hope to meet, and if so, I trust we shall either of us be willing to own our error without pride or envy. His presence will not only set us right, but keep

us so. You will daily, I hope, be viewing his unparalleled excellence, and catching a glimpse of his glory through the good old mirror of gospel doctrine. He loseth none of his lustre by being looked at, and though all the lights of heaven have been lighted from him, he shines still as the first and undiminished light. Jehovah is my light and my salvation: my Jesus and my joy. Thus sung the ancient seers, thus exults the host of heaven, and thus, my sister, let us endeavour to tune our harps. Keep to God's plan—by faith you are to live and walk. In Christ you are to stand by faith; as he is, so are we in this world. This is the point, this is the grace-interest, and this the basis of all our perfection, our acceptance, our security, and triumph. Go by this way to the invisible throne, enter by this door, you will find your admission free and honourable..... I can only express my sincere love to my aged sister Player, who was in Christ before me, but will not be in him longer than I, in whom I hope we daily meet, as he is the invisible centre of meeting to all the living, chosen, and redeemed family, in heaven and earth.

My name assigned me from of old is

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 26.

TO MR. AND MRS. PEARSON.

August 23, 1814.

My dear Friends,

I don't know how you are, but I hope you are well and hoping to be better. *Tell-tale* is a bad man, and is sure to show that he is not to be trusted with the keeping of a secret....

You know my business is not so much to *keep* as to *declare* secrets, and so no wonder that things should get talked of. I have been employed for years in proclaiming all I knew, and perchance I have not failed sometimes to tell more than I knew. But I have a strong desire to tell the truth, and not to speak leasing. Nothing but truth will be sanctioned by my Lord in any place, at any time, or among any people, or for any purpose. "*Secret things* belong unto the

Lord our God, but those that are revealed belong unto us." There are certain things connected with our system of creation, salvation, and damnation, which are kept secret. These can make no part of our faith, neither can they be needful to that life of faith which we are ordained to live. His sovereign strokes demand our reverence, but he stops not to render to dying man an explicit reason. It is the work of real faith to rely on his testimony and character, and rest events with his unerring hand. To indulge contention is to commit my shattered bark to the raging tempest and the foaming deep, hopeless of advantage! In revelation alone stands direction adapted to every becoming enquirer. *More* information as to the present or the future is unnecessary, *less* was not thought sufficient. To examine with reverence as in our Maker's presence is a just duty, and cannot fail to prove a lasting privilege. What we cannot learn from the Bible we need not learn on earth. But what a field of declared truth is comprehended in *the Book*! Yes, but it doth not mention, saith carnal reason, a certain thing I want to know. This may be, and be a mercy too; God hides in mercy as well as reveals in mercy. But may we not then expect events far worse than can be imagined? Nothing will be but what will prove becoming with what is, and what ought to be, all things considered in their different connections. Wisdom will ever shine, justice will ever be heard and honoured, love will reign in God, mercy will remain established in the very heavens, in all the seed of Christ being there exalted. But there is a hell. True, and there is a need for it. How does this appear? From its being prepared of God. For when his wisdom, prudence, and justice are considered, we are inevitably led to confess that what he thus prepares must be just and necessary. And while we reason upon his perfections, we are standing as on a rock. Was it just that Christ should suffer what he did? Then it must be just that sin be punished elsewhere, or in other persons on whom it may be found. As to the duration of punishment, it stands equally attested with the duration of happiness. Except it be said that Christ's mediation may deserve heaven for ever, without supposing the creature's sins to deserve hell for ever. But to what am I wandering? My friends are going to heaven, without going to hell.

The blessing of eternal life is certain to all the election

of grace. Uncertainty does not attach to the purposes of salvation, nor to the covenant of redemption. This you have believed with comfort many days. This I believe, and but for sovereignty had found no safety. Where God appears most sovereign I appear most safe, or my safety most appears. Thrice happy they who have reached the untroubled world of high perfection. . . . How many of our friends in Lincolnshire have been sent for since we knew each other! Their memory seems dear, their kindness affecting; and what should I say to or of death, for thus plundering me, were it not for the sweet persuasion that they are enriched by my loss, and that I shall follow to join with them for ever, to adore, admire, enjoy, and love each other and the Lord. O my dear friends! Past hours, past places and circumstances command my tears still. We lived in friendship, we wished each other well; time was short, truth was sweet; a degree of sympathy often felt, our means of grace were sanctified by the grace of the means. We were despised, yet able to bear it; we were little, but great things enjoyed. Ah! wicked heart that mine was, so little thankful, so much to be thankful for! Those days made too deep an impression to be forgotten. I remember our friendly walks, our pleasant evenings in Boston, at Kirton, at Swineshead, &c. But these feelings must be checked, these prospects are gone: will they never return? God knoweth. . . . A few more cutting winds and tossing waves, and we enter into shelter and sit down to rest. I much wish to know how you are. . . .

You will believe me if you can,

Yours most affectionately in Jesus our Lord,

J. STEVENS.

LETTER 27.

TO MR. AND MRS. PEARSON.

Oct. 14, 1817.

My dear Friends,

. . . . I am glad to find you still desire the sincere milk of the word, and that your relish remains, though you are put to cater and carve for yourselves. God has, I trust, mercifully fitted you for your place, by past

means and close exercise of your minds, and I think you are better off without preaching than many of your neighbours are with it. Perhaps you will grant this, and still lament over your lot; and indeed it is a favour to have an interested aspiring mind, and to be elevated to the heights of our Redeemer's throne. The heirs of salvation are scattered at present in various directions; but the decree will stand, they shall all be gathered together in one, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, *even in Him*. Jacob declared 1700 years before the incarnation took place, that "to him should the gathering of the people be." Isaiah said, that to his ensign should the Gentiles seek, and that to him should men come as their righteousness and strength: and the Lord himself said, "All that the Father giveth me shall come to me;" and "every one that hath heard and learned of the Father cometh unto me." Now, my friends, how pleasing the consideration that these scriptures are fulfilled, not only in thousands of our fellow-men, but in our own hearts and in our own acts and enjoyments. We stood distant from him afar—we knew him not—we had no thought that such a friend existed, nor sense of needing so extraordinary a Deliverer and Advocate. O, the riches of unexpected and undesired grace! Grace higher than human thought or human fault can rise. Human acts must necessarily be infinitely below the acts of God, whether we speak of them as moral or immoral, spiritual or natural. And this is our comfort: for if we could extend evil to an equality with God's acts, how should victory be on the side of good, or mercy give just exemption to criminals? Sin is immeasurably evil against God, yet grace abounds, nor can mortal offence be possibly commensurate with his righteousness. "For if by one man's offence death reigned by one, *much more* they who receive abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness, shall reign in life by one, Jesus Christ!" The heavenly is above the earthly Adam; his transcendency of personal greatness will for ever maintain transcendency of worth and influence in his mediatorial work. Sin can never be more than the act of a mere creature, while we find righteousness not only may be, but is the act of one who is God as well as man. O, the depths of *His* wisdom and knowledge whom we are honoured to adore! We read of the depths of Satan, but they are depths which a devil can sound, while the depths of

God only God can know! What a *nothing* is the creature even when a friend to his Maker! And what is he more when become an enemy! We have heard of the *great opposition a creature makes to his own conversion*, and that it requires greater power than to create from nothing, because *nothing* makes no opposition, while the sinner pertinaciously fights with all his might. Poor thing! what can he do? In wiping the dust from your shoe you observe an ant is journeying over it; the dust you readily flap off—it makes no opposition, but the ant threatens to torment, and seems resolved to act in hostility; do you not find the difference between the inanimated particles of dust and the supposed insect? No, not you! but with equal ease you remove him at your pleasure. Yet *you* are both finite, but God is infinite. The thought of his greatness gives dignity to the mind that adores him, and generates new desire to praise him, and determination to endeavour to trust him and fear not.

I remain, your Brother and Friend,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 28.

TO MRS. S. PEARSON.

Oct. 25, 1819.

My dear Sister in the line of grace,

The ways of unerring providence have not only cast us far distant from each other, but have so changed my relative circumstances that I seem to be hindered from seeing you, though I cannot think it would for a moment be right to say, "Satan hath hindered me;" yet I am aware that the old creature has no good will towards either of us. It is some satisfaction, however, to know that heavenly chains do not wear out,—*his* chain is as free from rust or decay now as when Immanuel first ordered it to be put on. . . . I have found that I can be made heartily thankful to my divine Father for his gifts long after I have lost the enjoyment of them. Yea, it has often done me good to consider how long he continued what I never deserved from his hands. O that I could more heartily, more copiously, and more constantly praise his excellence, and magnify his goodness.

More than forty years have I been peeping at his works through the windows of mortality, and breathing through perishable nostrils a fleeting breath, and creeping over the dusty surface of a temporary world to an unenvied sleeping place, there to rest till our Father calls up his family in the morning of the great sabbatism. Then shall I put on my new clothes made of old stuff, improved to a degree that will defy my soul to fully descry or declare. Strange as the idea may seem to common sense, they will be better than new. When my once venerable grandfather stood first upon the earth his clothing was wholly new, but it was destructible, it gathered spots, became worm-eaten, and at last dropped all to pieces. But, my dear sister, my new clothes will neither take a soil, nor admit a worm, nor suffer a rent—no! not for ages of ages; no, not for ever and ever! But why do I narrowly say, *my* new clothes, when you, my sister, will have a dress of like sort, yea, just like mine? for I expect male and female will be dressed alike in that day. Our dear Lord has laid out a vast deal of his wealth upon us, and as a mark of his love has concluded to have all his friends' clothes fashioned just like his own. Uniformity will be all the taste then, and things ancient be *all* the delight of *all* the people! There will be no *fancies* there; wisdom free from folly will pervade every breast, and to be "LIKE HIM" will be all the joy and boast.

Now the case is far different, every bosom is teased with fancy, and very few can bear the thought of their old suit being put off. Some there are who devote all their time to patching and mending the wearing garments of their neighbours as well as their own, but at last it is generally agreed that further mending is impossible, and oft the rent is made worse by what is done. *They* have the highest advantage who have had a sight of the Lord's will by faith, and are led to understand that when they are unclothed they shall be clothed upon. Nothing can be more suited to induce a man to resign his old coat, than to shew him a new one, far better than he ever had in possession, and assure him that excellent covering is laid up for him to enjoy when his old dress is totally worn out and put off. Things future are reported to our faith that we may not only know of them, but in measure know the things themselves, that we may be helped against our foolish partialities for home-made articles, when

the heavenly things are so much better. It is plain our heavenly Father never intended to detain his children long in their earthly coverings, but preferred drawing them through the scenes of mortal nature to the more immediate way of taking them up to his glory, as he did the angels. The reason is evident,—his topmost design was not that of making complex immortals happy, but to illustrate and magnify his own perfections by a regulated dispensation of equity and sovereignty, through the two great forms of truth called law and gospel. Besides, his perfections obtain a remarkable display through the amazing plan of spiritualizing matter, and glorifying bodies of earth in union with souls in heaven. Could he not have distinguished his people from the rest by changing all their bodies as he did Enoch and Elijah, instead of leaving them to decay by time, toil, and disease, and thus to die? He doubtless could, but then he would have resigned one of the most interesting and impressive opportunities of displaying his wisdom and power that could possibly be conceived of; *viz.*, that of raising the dead bodies of the just before the eyes of the wicked then living on the earth, before the angels in glory, and to the view of the saints themselves. How affecting the scene to witness! How will the guilty shake! How will the righteous shout for joy! We shall I trust be among the Benjamites in that day, my friend! The right hand favourites,—what is like it? what is worth it? Earthly grandeur will then create no envy! Thrones and crowns will not then excite a wish, nor pay for seeking. The very temple of the universe will then totter on its base, and the whole intelligent world be deeply affected. But, “Come, ye blessed of my Father,” will then be enchanting words. O my sister, strive to know our gracious God. Time is short with us—very. Love is behind and before us: Jer. xxxi. 3. Jesus is expecting us. Death is whetting his scythe—the grave-digger is ready made—the undertaker and the coffin-wood are ready made! *Are we ready?* Serious thought! Looking unto Jesus, let us say, Behold thy servants!

My christian love to your *second* lord.

Ever yours in ours,

J. STEVENS.

LETTER 29.

TO THE SAME.

April 1, 1819.

My dear Friend in friendship everlasting,

....I bless God that your mind is kept up to the everlasting things of grace and equity. These are days in which little is applauded in Israel, but false candour, unscriptural charity, fleshly unity, and sad indifference to the foundational truths of the gospel.

Great deception is practising on the simple disciples of the adorable Jesus, under the most specious pretences of glorifying God and saving the souls of men. This is done, partly *by separating what ought to be kept in union*. Thus we have some busied in dividing the *natures* in the person of our Lord, instead of duly distinguishing them. But division here is destruction. We have no Saviour remaining suited to the circumstances in which we live, nor able for the deliverance which we need, nor capable of the honours we are enjoined to bring. Our Saviour must be such an one as heaven can prudently trust, and earth lawfully worship. If only a human person, as many now affirm, then to trust him were folly, and to worship him blasphemy. To give him divine titles and deny him divine perfections, is again to mock him in coverings not his own. And by speaking highly of him as if he were considered a divine person, while he is believed to be only human, this deceives the simple and unwary. Such make him less glorious than his titles, but I still esteem him more glorious than words can express. He may be praised without possibility of excess, loved without danger of inordinancy, trusted without liability to disappointment, and followed without being at all misguided. His footsteps are safe directories, his wealth unsearchable riches, and his kingdom everlasting rest. In him is displayed the sovereignty of grace, and by him is evidenced the equity of government. Opposites are not blended in him, nor deficiencies included. He has passed under changes but has never been morally better or worse; though made perfect by sufferings, he never was imperfect in his own person. Of persons he is the most wonderful in present existence, and of servants the most deserving. But his servitude required that he should have a Lord's ability, and his official performances prove his per-

soul sufficiency and worth. He therefore who holds sentiments destructive of his true person as God and man, holds principles that overthrow his mediatorial work. His person mutilated, is, in effect, his work ruined. Some are deceived by separating faith and works, though by the latter the former is perfected. Faith without works would be unworthy the gift of God, and no honour or safety to man. In faith God plants the tree of righteousness, in works he gathers his fruits. As he does all things for his own glory, he had denied himself had he ordained faith without works. But men are also deceived by uniting and blending things that ought to be separated. The religion of nature ought not to be blended with that of revelation. They are in their nature distinct and different. The former was common to mankind and confined to this earthly world, and founded in the fallible rectitude of man; the latter is peculiar to God's elect in Christ, is connected with a future world, where it is enjoyed and practised in the highest perfection. There the sun can be seen without winking, and existence be perpetuated without sinning or sleeping. No time is lost there, nor any wasted. But here we find men have low ideas of heavenly things, and take moral virtues for christian graces, and natural tempers for spiritual dispositions, the effects of philosophy for the fruits of the Spirit, fleshly quietude and carnal ease for christian patience; thus we find the simple are deceived.

But it is the confounding of the Hebrew covenant with the gospel covenant that forms a continual source of pulpit blundering, and public deception to weak understandings. Though these dispensations widely differ, yet they are constantly blended. Hence duty and doctrine are made to oppose each other, and no wonder, when one belongs to one covenant and the other to another, as they are used. The equity of government should, yea, *must* follow the sovereignty of grace; but our exhortation and offer men reverse this order. They do not see that their plan is made up of two opposite dispensations. Man was first under equity by creation, but if we now treat him as under equity, it can only condemn him, it offers no mercy, it knows not of it, it is not suited to faith, nor can it justify the guilty. But when sovereignty has quickened me into vital union to my strength and fulness, then let equity look at me in and through my Lord, my righteousness and

king, and I fear no evil. Favour through equity might suit my great grandfather, but his grandchildren have lost their primitive ability and fitness, and now can only enjoy equity through favour. . . . I remain with my dear motherless children in good health, though often sadly dispirited, and my face made foul with weeping, for I am a feeble piece and often think no man like me, but my Lord has bowels of tenderness on which I rely.

Pray for me God bless you,

J. STEVENS.

LETTER 30.

TO MR. AND MRS. PEARSON.

Jan. 25, 1820.

My very dear Friends,

I fear you may think I remember you not, but while I muse on the passing scenes of life, and mark the mortal crowd of busy travellers hastening to their destined home, —my friends, my old friends take their several tracks before my imagination; my heart wishes them well as they present themselves, or are presented mysteriously to my view. They remind me of my Father's past kindness, and my heart is touched with gratitude for the past, while my bosom heaves a sigh, and my eye yields a silent tear as its best tribute to their memory. O my Father, in Jesus, thy dear, thy first-begotten Son, bless them indeed, and fill those hands with bread, terrestrial and celestial, which in past years of my anxious life, ministered to my convenience and comfort. Oh Jesus, my once dying, but now for ever reigning Lord, do shed the heart-affecting smiles of thy lovely countenance upon them, and cause their lips to utter praises for thy transcendently glorious acts of love, of merit, and of power. O thou promised Comforter of the Lamb's followers, shew them in thy glass and glory the dear Redeemer's person, headship, fulness, merit, right, might, and majesty. O shew them how he took their persons into his bosom, and their sins on his back, in the doleful garden and on the mount of victory and spoils. Words

are but arbitrary things, yet Calvary is become, by the association of ideas with it, an impressive term. What was there done, added import to the place and its name, to the contemplative mind. There Innocence, with an unstained hand, for ever wiped away the foulest blots, and adorable Justice maintained her indefeasible rights and honours. There the long-held judgment bond was cancelled, and as right was amply done, so wrong was fully chastened, and as fully abolished. What a meeting on that death-day of the Prince of Life! There and then Equity eternal brought forward the credit-folio, pregnant with demands which only God could calculate, which only God could pay. The magnitude of the concern seemed to darken the very heavens, shake the earth, and disturb the silent mansions of the dead. The friends of our interest wept and feared, and the very enemies of the cause were moved to pronounce their own sentence, by vindicating the injured Sufferer's character; mark the exclamation, "Truly this was a righteous man!"

There, on Calvary's hill, the principalities and powers of darkness mustered strong, and hell sent out its legions; desperate was the attempt, but the event was on our part glorious, and Satan was spoiled, with all his principalities and powers; though martialled to conquer, confusion became their crown. So let all thine enemies be confounded, O Lord; and let the ransomed ever praise the might of thy terrible acts, and the righteousness and mercy of thy reign. How sweet the thought of the Psalmist, "Mercy and truth are met together, righteousness and peace have kissed each other." Where perfections harmonize, let believers assemble, fix their dwelling, and adore! Here, my friends, we have been fixed, I trust, for years; here heaven smiles, and hope and patience have agreed to tarry....

Believe me, ever yours in Him,

J. STEVENS.

LETTER 31.

To MRS. PEARSON.

My dear Friend,

Dec. 26, 1821.

I know you have strong faith in the best object, but how to expect you can and will believe my testimony I

know not, though I still declare my christian good-will, in our dear Lord's name, and that I feel pleased with the continued friendship of my old fellow-travellers.

This is what they call a time of mirth ; alas ! that rational beings should be so besotted as to conclude that because a Saviour was born into the world, to save his people from their sin, therefore they are to celebrate the event by every form of licentiousness. How uniform the designs of Satan appear, whether we view him in the profane or the professing world. His aim ever is to abuse the goodness of heaven by rendering it an occasion of some further wickedness. So, by admitting the fact that a Saviour was born, he clothes the event with a false aspect, and promotes his devilish ends. When he cannot deny a fact to any advantage, he will aim to conceal its tendencies. Oh the depth of the wisdom and knowledge of God ! He can suffer fools to have their own foolish ways, and yet take them in their own foolishness. He can promote what he loves by permitting what he hates. In the course of his providence men act with one end in view, and he secures another. Many attempts have been made against the Lord Jesus, but they have always, in the end, been made to minister to his declarative honour. Joseph's brethren were bent in opposing him, and especially in opposing his exaltation above and before themselves ; but behold, they wrought the very thing they wished to prevent ; they helped Joseph forward, though by a rugged road, to the mount of elevation. Thus it was in the case of our dear Master ; his brethren pushed him forward to the cross, not perceiving that he would convert that into a ladder, whereby to climb the throne of universal dominion over both his friends and his foes. Subtlety may hatch mischief, but wisdom and power divine can easily make the hateful progeny work for a good cause, though it be by a contrary motion, like wheels in a clock, which, while they some of them turn in a contrary direction, yet are made to contribute, with other wheels, toward the right position of the hand on the dial plate, to point out the true time of day. This supreme power, guided by such excelling wisdom, deserves our admiration, and leaves our warmest praise behind.

I find still that the human heart is at enmity with the true Christ of God, in one way or another, even among professors. Most men are more inclined to ease their

labour, and would rather believe as their forefathers did, than be at the trouble to fairly weigh their thoughts in the sanctuary balances. This, however, convinces me of the great importance of such poor things being set in a right way at the first; for obstinacy is less injurious *then* by far; and though such disciples reflect little honour on their teachers, yet they very seldom get out of the track into which you have conducted them. It is possible for obstinacy to become a negative good in its effect. Others, who are rapid receivers of they know not what, are often no small trouble in another way; for teaching them is like writing on sand in a box, the first time any thing strikes against the box, your writing is obliterated. O what a mercy to man that salvation is by God's acts, and only the evidence and experience of it connected with his. That our Saviour was born at Bethlehem, is talked of by many; but who, or what this Saviour was before his birth, I believe very few consider. It is amusing to find with what confidence many will *open their mouths* against the antiquity of the intellectual Shekinah, or divine residence, and how deliberately they will *shut their own mouths*, by confessing that Jesus Christ came from God, from heaven, and is ascended up "where he was before!" Some people seem only sure they are right, while they continue to believe and assert verbal contradictions are coherent truth! I lately delivered five discourses on Isaiah lxiii. 9. Of course *the Angel of his Presence* came before my view. One fat sheep carried away his wool with his carcase, and some lean ones butted and bounced, and then lay down. But you know I am now not very likely to be more than *pained* at these things. I stand up to preach a *considered* faith, and a *firmly believed one*. The truth often proves a trying crucible to conceited and lazy minds. I believe I am preaching regularly to many who little know the worth of the sentiments attempted to be maintained; and sometimes I am so ashamed of what they call *the sermon*, that I want to get away from myself very badly, but cannot! But thanks be to grace, to merit, to power, and to faithfulness, I am kept trying to commend the eternal and manifestative acts of the ever adorable Three in the Godhead, as they are originally expressed in the constitution of the God-man, and only begotten of the Father; and as they open to us in the parenthesis of time, through the inspired records and federal operations of the Holy Comforter.

As to "the Angel of his Presence," I considered the same person was meant who was afterwards called *the Son* of the Father in truth and love. The title I thought was applicable on six accounts:—First, because in this angel was contained the *intellectual Shekinah*, in which God *always is*, in distinction from the corporeal Shekinah, as the fire, the cloud, the bush, &c. in which God *was not always*: Second, because he is always with and *in the presence* of God: Third, because he who is called the Angel is personally God in the essential unity; and the angel-nature in which God rendered himself present to men, was a part of his person who appeared, which never could be said of any of the corporeal residences: Fourth, because he proceeded forth and *came from* God's presence into this world: Fifth, because Jehovah was present to his people wherever this Angel-Jehovah appeared; as to *visibility*, he became the personater of Jehovah in Trinity: Sixth, because by him the people are received *into Jehovah's presence*. These were the chief ideas; you will not see any thing to instruct *you* in them, but may perceive that I am sometimes led, as in times past, to dwell a little on the despised sentiment of *Christ before christians*. You can caution my good friend Mr. P. to omit the reading of this part of my lean letter. He means well, and is my brother, though we date the first existence of our Father's first-born differently. Give my love to him.

Believe me, though remiss and faulty, a true friend, with the same face, except a little older,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 32.

TO MR. AND MRS. PEARSON.

Aug. 30, 1822.

My dear Friends,

The time is fast approaching when I, according to my engagement, hope to see you once more together in this frail and fleeting state on earth. Since I saw you last, many of our Father's family have crossed the Jordan, and left this vale of cares and tears, and also left all their sorrows behind them. Neither shall they be sent after them,

or hereafter meet them to their shame or pain. Where misery had its birth, in the same world it shall find its grave, as far as it respects the loved saints of the Lord, the the second Adam. This we know on good authority, and it is to be lamented that our knowledge has too often so little useful effect on our reasonings and conclusions.

The ever-consummating designs of heaven are never disordered or interrupted, whatever confusion may overspread our little plans. All the long pathway of life is open to the eye of God our Father. His undecreasing love is swaying the counsels of his wisdom, and the arm of his power, for the welfare of his home-coming people. He makes their fears their protectors, and their sorrows the promoters of their joy. And while their weakness is experienced, their strength is multiplied, and by feeling they have no might, they take themselves their Great Strength, and prevail.

Satan is an enemy to matrimony; but heaven decreed it before he existed to oppose it. He would have been able to practise his machinations upon the poor helpless woman, had she remained single; but it is her getting married that renders her more than a match for the old one himself. O what a plan! what an admirable ground of security and victory! Now the poor thing that he has led captive, sported with, terrified, and triumphed over, can walk abroad without danger of death and ruin. What is the worth of union? Omnipotence and weakness, all things and emptiness, demerit and worthiness, may well be said to be fitly matched. The property, as they say, comes all on one side, but what matters that? there is enough for both, and more than ever can be exhausted, so that all is well. And what is worth remarking is, the *love* and the property originate in the same quarter. It could not be a mercenary affair on the husband's side: the love is *real* to the person of the spouse, and the bridegroom never upbraids her with her poverty, but teaches her to glory in owning it, that the love and suffering of her Lord may the more conspicuously appear....

I am, dear friends, yours, &c.

In the Lord Jesus Christ,

J. S.

LETTER 33.

TO MRS. PEARSON.

Feb. 16, 1823.

My dear Sister,

Grace be with you through its ancient channel, and according to its eternal purposes in the Head of the family. Multiplication of grace is possible in the vessels of mercy, though the Fountain does not admit of more, for *more than all* we cannot conceive of, and *less than all*, we are not heirs of in the head of promises. It is *an all* that aptly shows us the wisdom, the forethought, the kindness of our inexpressibly merciful Father. It is grace for all times, for all places, and for all cases, that the sons of grace can be in. Of its fulness we are constantly to receive, and grace to exemplify grace We are waiting till he comes: we have looked for the blessed hope, the final world of sinless inhabitants, and are but a step from those inconceivables, that are to be at last the transporting objects of our disembodied spirits, in manner how we know not, and the place we have not seen; but as it is all the gift of immense love, through the infallible virtue of the Saviour's blood and obedience, we cannot but be satisfied with it, and whenever the Spirit turns our thoughts that way, we rejoice in hope of that glory to come. We are sure it is to come, we are assured that he will shew us his glory, to the praise of his grace. The reign of grace opens into the world of glory, for there it is consummated, and thither election, redemption, and sanctification, conspire to raise us. The first gives an interest in all good, the second rescues us from all evil, and the last imparts the enjoyment of the other two, and is an off-shining ray of our Lord's face, sweetly serving to evidence that we are related to him, and are taken into his fellowship, to reflect his character, and resound his praise. It is Christ the Holy One in us, and shining out through our garments to whiten them, and cancel their many defects. What an honour does holiness put upon God's otherwise unknown children! What are all the tinsel ornaments of this perishable world, when set in competition with the lustre of true humility and sterling integrity, grounded in the knowledge and love of Christ, as first in the bosom of the Father, then on the cross for the sinner, and finally on the throne for

the saints! Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God; they are sinless by faith in the sacrifice, with and by which they draw near. They are as clean as the blood can make them, as they stand under its purchased application. They have a double aspect, one from nature and another from grace: one from Adam, another from Christ! one as viewed in their own services, another as beheld in the perfected and perfecting work of Jesus. O the blessedness of the people who have put on Christ in their believing through the Comforter; who walk in him so as not to deny his name, his doctrine, his commandments, nor fail to exemplify his devotional, inoffensive, and heaven-anticipating temper. His righteousness is an excellent robe in which to worship on all occasions; it is always acceptable to God, and renders the sinner accepted who puts it on by faith, who admires it as shewn in the scriptures, and rejoices in it as his ornament and safeguard. It can neither be made better nor worse by the wearer, but it is impossible to possess it without benefit: it yields confidence, it restores comfort, it hides faults, it excludes boasting, it repels fiery darts, it dignifies and exalts the possessor. It will be an excellent covering in your time of (expected) detention. May God honour you with strength to put it on and wrap it close around. It will promote vigour, and minister cheerfulness. In it you will have the sweetest expressions of your Saviour's betrothing love and kindness. But you know it for yourself, it has been found to fit you, and I wish you increasing delight in it, and fear not that you will ever think too highly of this your heavenly dress. The maker of it is so reflected in it, that you cannot receive it and forget or dis-esteem him . . .

Your tried friend,

J. STEVENS.

LETTER 34.

TO THE SAME.

March 16, 1824.

My dear Friend,

God is love—we have found him so for years, we shall find him so for ever. He is our Fount, we are his empti-

essess, his receivers, in whom he has chosen to set forth his fulness, to exemplify his name, to glorify his attributes, and inwrite his holy covenant.

God is love always, not sometimes; what he is, he is immutably. Mutability is inadmissible in his nature, and what his nature is, his actions are, for he never denies himself. If we were what we shall be when the Holy Ghost has finished his work, as really as Christ has finished his, we should not deny ourselves. But alas! now, self-denial is often our duty remarkably:—but we are double characters; God is a simple being—he is oneness, he is love. *God is love in all he wills*. Self-love is his excellence, and the infinite spring of all his purposes. What he ordains, he designs thereby to honour himself, to get to himself a glorious name. As he is the first cause and the chief good, he can act from no higher motive. Creatures are infinitely different; they have a higher object and end to propose than themselves: they are not self-begotten, self-existing, self-sustained. They have an object to love, who has a greater claim to their love than they can have themselves! They are not love, though they love Him that is love.

God is love in all he does. His acts of power are governed by his will, and make his intentions known. As he never wills sovereignly without performing seasonably, so he never acts powerfully without having first willed so to do. Hence revelation ever intimates a design, and operation proves intention. Either no men are converted, or all that are converted were eternally elected. What but love draws the distant, alienated mind to espouse the rights of God and condemn himself? “With loving-kindness,” saith Jehovah, “have I drawn thee.” God herein shews that He is love. If he strip us of our dearest friends, he still acts in love. How will the human heart vote the absence of any object that seems to stand between and hinder the free returns of love! Perhaps Sarah felt a little of this when she stirred up Abraham to banish poor Hagar. The Lord is a jealous God, and will not have a divided heart; he demands *all* our hearts; and hence he shews his love, when we are apt to think he shews his displeasure only; for we are too apt to judge by sense and reason instead of judging by revelation and by faith. Wise parents, however, are not to be diverted from their plans, by the immature thoughts of their children.

God is love in the lawful use of the law. This is evi-

dent by the consequences that attend his working by it. He strips us in love, but what of ? Rags, filthy rags, rotten rags, that will make no good thing : other rags will make paper, but these rags are only fit for fire : other rags may be so improved as to pass among men as valuable to recompense for the good things of sustenance, but these rags are worth nothing—are worse than nothing—are disgraceful rags. It may well then be an act of love to strip us of them.

Does the Lord correct us by his just love ? It is because he loves us : he dealeth with us as sons ; for what son is he whom the Father chasteneth not ? This may be hard to admit while our backs are smarting, but afterwards it is readily owned that his dealings have been wise and good.

God is love in his providence to his people. They not only have many mercies, but they *know* it : they have them because of his love, they have them with his blessing. Others have like temporals *with a curse* : Psa. xcii. 7.

God is love in his gospel. Here his character shines most gloriously, most fully and for ever. Love, here, is seen at the head of all his purposes, promises, and acts in general. Here the field is large, and defies my sight. Here we have more than we can think ! I must leave my friend to amplify. But in Christ Jesus the subject must be pursued, it is in him : God is love I thank you for your kind remembrance of me ; *herein is God's love.* He has done great things for me, and let loose the enemy upon me, but *herein he is love.* He is still with me and keeps the fire on the altar, his goodness and mercy be adored In death may we prove that God in Christ is love. Accept my christian love in Christ.

I am, my dear friend, ever yours,

J. STEVENS.

LETTER 35.

TO THE SAME.

March 3, 1824.

My dear Friends,

I thank you for kindly inquiring after my welfare ; and for your kind wish that I might be as spiritually happy

as a faithful minister of Christ can expect to be. Indeed, my friend, a *faithful minister* is an important and exalted character; he is a piece of workmanship that only God can make, and, when any way damaged, only God can repair. He is a monument of supreme favour, and a reflection of all the outlines of the grand scheme of infinite love, boundless mercy, ransoming merit, and omnipotent energy. The devil can go far towards spoiling a good minister, but he cannot make one. I do, however, think that he undesignedly helps to fit up many a one, though he is no friend to them really. To a *minister* he has no objection I think, provided he be not a *faithful* one. For as Satan is a general dealer, and confines himself to no trade in particular, so that he can gain his ends by his undertakings, he has much work for ministers to do that other classes of agents cannot effect. But *faithful* men he has more trouble with than he likes, and yet he is so crafty that he will sometimes even make them serve his interest, at seasons when they little think of aiding him.

A *faithful* minister will be more anxious to stand like a perpendicular raised upon a base, neither leaning to the one side nor the other; truth is his object, and integrity his principle. These may be expensive to him, but he never thinks them too dear. He who is *faithful* must be *full* of faith; then he will be full of faith's objects, then he will sometimes be pouring out from his abundance to fill others. He is not only full of faith, but he is filled *by* faith with all the fulness of God. He cannot keep back part of the truth, he cannot deny any of it, or bear to hear it decried. He is faithful to his Master, to his brethren, and his own soul. He cannot palliate vice, nor trim the gospel. He has no objection to please, but he makes it a point to aim to *please God*, and if with doing that he cannot please men, he leaves them *unpleased*. He is not only not ashamed of his Lord, but he desires not to be *a shame to him*. He can do nothing knowingly against the truth, nor can he help feeling and confessing how little he can do for it. When any propose to divide Christ, his heart is touched, like the harlot's for her infant before Solomon, 1 Kings iii. 26; only he cannot help refusing to part with the object of his love.

He that is *faithful*, must be *merciful*, condescending, and *prudent*, else his faithfulness will require some other name.

Faithfulness, however, is no ground for expecting applause, or even due respect. A compromising character gains *the laurels of human commendation*, while fidelity will be *censured* as harsh, unchristian, uncandid, unbecoming, unprofitable, unbearable, and any thing but unblameable. But the Lord is at hand! The Judge standeth at the door! O that I may never forget this.... They are divided at.... Some can split a cherry. O what a state this is! Heaven is rest, and union is there secured for ever. Christ holds all things together there, and Satan and sin have no being there! I have many happy times still in my work,—but not all such times. But an hour of his presence, how confirming! how consoling! All's well! We *must enter*, though tribulation is in the way. Purpose, purchase, and power, secure our arrival. We have a Trinity of persons, and a trinity of things on our side. The opposition only brightens the evidence of our safety, and keeps up attention to the object in prospect. I am not sure that we should be better if there were no *enemy*, but I am confident we should be lost without our *best Friend*. To him I commend you—in him I hope to meet you. For his sake I love you still, and in him remain your brother,

J. STEVENS.

LETTER 36.

TO THE SAME.

On receiving intelligence of her approaching death.

Sep. 14, 1827.

And is the veil now rending? Is that slender partition about to fall, that has for many years stood between my dear sister and the final vision of her heavenly Lord? Thus report has signified, nor is the news surprising.

You, my favoured friend, have been anticipating this now concluding scene, and though you never could discover the manner how your temporary vehicle was to be dissolved, you have long observed the certainty of *the fact*, and left *the mode* to him who is proper and supreme Lord of all you are. Nothing will *he adopt*, or *suffer to occur*, but what shall be *consistent with*, and *expressive of* his unabat-

you will have continual incitement to love and praise his holy name. Thus will your daily duties prove your daily privileges, and your faith and hope will be promoted in the very business of the world.

Life, my dear children, is fraught with many vexations and cares: never flatter yourselves, nor give way to a dispirited frame of mind. Act your parts, and aim to be useful. You will never want for a few friends, and should they be fewer than you may have expected, be content; your heavenly Father numbered them for you, before you entered the turning paths of this ever shortening life. Let his character ever dwell upon your minds; it will mightily tend to fashion yours aright. He is your tender Father; he is your faithful Friend: be ye followers and imitators of him, and leave all the result with him. Make a friend of him by casting all your care upon him. He *trieth* the righteous, but he never forsakes them. Never let the things of this world thrust aside those of the next: remember you are always going to your graves, and to the presence of your God. Attend his throne in private, keep his truth in view, frequent his ordinances, and watch your spirits in them.

Studiously cultivate the principle of self-government. So to do will save you much pain and shame. Be dutiful and kind to one another, and to every branch of your family connection: especially evidence a due veneration and regard for your venerable parent in his solitary state, and in his passing through the few remaining days of his pilgrimage. God has helped him to the close of a long life, and blessed him with a good report through faith. Aim to secure the like by every prudential means in your power. It is of more worth than gold; yea, than much fine gold.

Should any one of you be permitted for a moment to lose the just balance of your temper, watch that it be met either with silence, or with good humour. Pretend not to debate in anger: wait for a more favourable moment. Think first, then speak slowly, and accustom yourselves to put the best construction possible on one another's words and ways. In a word, study the things that make for peace, and whereby one may edify another.....I am bearing in mind the idea of coming somehow to see you all together, if the Lord permit.....

From your affectionate Father,

JOHN STEVENS.

his safe counsel, and rest satisfied that if you can see very little, he can see very clearly, and you know you cannot *both* be lost; and I feel persuaded you cannot be parted. And this, I dare say, is your persuasion too.

Gather your ready-wrought robe about you, and bind it as close as your little strength can allow you to do; and ask the Comforter to *fasten it* for you, and you need not fear; but so clad the Lord will *know* you, and present you before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

This probably is the last communication from that servant of your Lord,* by whose humble efforts he has often invigorated your spirit, and extended your views of his glorious person and work in by-gone days: days fraught with pledges not now to be thrown away. Farewell in Jesus—my dear sister, farewell. Peace be with you, all peace, blood-made peace, ratified peace, endless peace. “He is our peace.” He is Lord of all. Shortly I must follow; the Lord help me—the Lord help you: as thy days thy strength shall be in Him. In bonds that defy the destroying hand of death,

I remain for ever,

Your brother and joint heir in Jesus,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 37.

TO HIS SON, MR. JOHN STEVENS, JUN., SOON AFTER
HIS MARRIAGE.

Aug. 12, 1825.

My dear Son,

Having opportunity of conveying a line by Mr. S., I embrace it.....I was glad to hear of your safe arrival with your dear companion, and of the safety of your furniture; and also that Mr. Fairy was so well. May the good Lord be ever with you all, and render you great blessings to one another.

I trust the hand of God is in it, and that he will smile upon your every lawful attempt, in all your earthly affairs. Daily implore his blessing on all you do, and offer daily thanks for every mercy, and by thus marking his dealings,

* This was Mr. Stevens's last letter to his friend, Susannah Pearson, who departed this life, October 14, 1847.

you will have continual incitement to love and praise his holy name. Thus will your daily duties prove your daily privileges, and your faith and hope will be promoted in the very business of the world.

Life, my dear children, is fraught with many vexations and cares: never flatter yourselves, nor give way to a dispirited frame of mind. Act your parts, and aim to be useful. You will never want for a few friends, and should they be fewer than you may have expected, be content; your heavenly Father numbered them for you, before you entered the turning paths of this ever shortening life. Let his character ever dwell upon your minds; it will mightily tend to fashion yours aright. He is your tender Father; he is your faithful Friend: be ye followers and imitators of him, and leave all the result with him. Make a friend of him by casting all your care upon him. He *trieth* the righteous, but he never forsakes them. Never let the things of this world thrust aside those of the next: remember you are always going to your graves, and to the presence of your God. Attend his throne in private, keep his truth in view, frequent his ordinances, and watch your spirits in them.

Studiously cultivate the principle of self-government. So to do will save you much pain and shame. Be dutiful and kind to one another, and to every branch of your family connection: especially evidence a due veneration and regard for your venerable parent in his solitary state, and in his passing through the few remaining days of his pilgrimage. God has helped him to the close of a long life, and blessed him with a good report through faith. Aim to secure the like by every prudential means in your power. It is of more worth than gold; yea, than much fine gold.

Should any one of you be permitted for a moment to lose the just balance of your temper, watch that it be met either with silence, or with good humour. Pretend not to debate in anger: wait for a more favourable moment. Think first, then speak slowly, and accustom yourselves to put the best construction possible on one another's words and ways. In a word, study the things that make for peace, and whereby one may edify another.....I am bearing in mind the idea of coming somehow to see you all together, if the Lord permit.....

From your affectionate Father,

JOHN STEVENS.

and neither gets better nor worse, that I can discover..... I often find my head frequently troubled with darting pains..... But I am now counting how great my mercy has been that I am not always in pain, that I have had my feet so many years without lameness, and that my holy, adored Lord has reasons for suffering all my frailties. I would rather have them absent, apart from their uses; but if they are come as admonishers, as warnings, and to excite my attention to eternal things, I dare not say much about their removal, but with caution, and by asking my heavenly Father to judge what is best for me. I often suppose my continuance on earth may not be long; but human imagination is lighter than vapour, and often unfounded. I could wish to be useful while I stay, be humbled under a sense of my many mercies, live nearer to my best Friend, and be less concerned about the bursting bubbles that float around me. But I am lean and poor in the sight of plenty. I hope my grand-daughter Mary is well: the name to me must ever be dear, under certain associations. May the Spirit of the Lord bring her to say, though I be gone from hearing her say it, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God *my* Saviour." O what is all this retiring scene of things around us, compared with a spark of undying grace in the heart! an image of Christ in the mind! a copy of God's covenant in the judgment and affections! a joyful hope of an incorruptible inheritance! and a patient submission to all the governing will of God! These are a portion that will never draw the heart from the right centre, will in no way injure the possessor. It is your lot, my dear son, I trust, to have these things in remembrance and admiration.

Ever estimate eternal things most highly. Mind that your every natural comfort be used as a stream from the great source, to guide your way to it. God's voice in all he gives is, Come to me, come nearer to me; never would any wealth or prosperity injure any man, did he hear and obey the voice of God therein. He never intends us to think that the aboundings of his communications are to be set up between us and himself, like the cursed calves of Jeroboam. O no! quite the contrary; we are to see him in all our mercies, and love and praise him more.

Express my kind love to Fanny. O that the spirit of

has given you a comfortable measure of human learning for your help and convenience, with a little of the valuables of this life to acquire your support on the earth ; he has done more, for he has given you the fear of his name, which is better than great riches ; yea, he has given you himself in covenant for ever. Now, my son, how can you sufficiently serve, honour, and extol the God of heaven ! You are insolvent, as sure as you are born, and will never become independent as long as you live. But never lament this, glory in it, talk about it, muse upon it, be thankful for it, and when you get to your last house, you will find all your neighbours like yourself.

Be opposed to that insinuating old gin-maker, who so artfully seduced your grandmother. When he urges you to discontent by setting forth your difficulties, vexations, and losses, and tries to fix your attention on your disadvantages, be as contrary as possible, and begin to count over your benefits, and review your mercies. If he is for flattering you, and stirring you up to think something of yourself, begin to protest you are *nothing* : *I am nothing*, exclaimed the greatest of good men. "Though I be nothing," said he, (2 Cor. xii. 11) "yet am I not behind the very chiefest of the apostles. May you be great in littleness, and little in greatness." Then shall the Lord be honoured, and you will not be injured. Keep close to the throne of God, watch your words and ways, and aim to attain a good degree of self-government. This will lessen your difficulty in passing through society, and save you many a pang. Study well the life of faith, and aim to exemplify it. And the God of peace be with you, be your God for ever, and your guide unto death.

I remain, your affectionate Father,

JOHN STEVENS.

God bless you and all the family. My love to Fanny, &c.

LETTER 39.

TO THE SAME.

April 7, 1827.

My dear Son,

..... My heel continues painful when I bear on it,

celestial Sun may be oft obscured, like the natural ruler of the day, it is never divided from the system of the spiritual world.

How sweetly do the *relations* of the Son of God to his Father and to his brethren, bind heaven and earth together! How fitly, herein, did infinite wisdom and love provide a basis on which to raise the whole fabric of the mystic temple, so that it might ever endure, and be the fitted habitation of God in its union with the glory-man, as the holiest of all. Whatever the lapsed state of the election of grace might need in the dispensation of the fulness of times, the relations of the Son of God were quite sufficient to supply. His every office, likewise, is a sacred channel through which the measureless fulness of his person, as the Son of God is shed forth, for the enjoyment of his ransomed church and regenerate people. Light, liberty, and protection are daily proceeding hence, to the sanctifying and governing of the new creation, through the official energies of the Holy Spirit. These official outlets of his undiminishable fulness, invite our daily attention, for to these our faith and hope are directed for every needful supply. The irradiating knowledge imparted through his prophetic office, by means of an orderly, connected, and consistent system of truths, is transforming and delightful. Hence we come to have the mind of Christ, and to possess the light of life. His sanctifying priesthood is a charming theme to the enlightened sinner: by this truth he becomes sanctified and free. Herein he acquires nearness to the eternal Majesty, and boldness to tell his errand, and frequently gains a cheering answer to his prayers. By faith he draws near under the blood of sprinkling. His kingly office clothes the former with dignity and efficiency, and throws a shield of protection around the spiritual worshipper, while presenting his spiritual sacrifice at the feet of Almighty Majesty. Thus, my son, may you ever adore, in light, sanctity, and safety, and Jesus be your way, your trust, and your life. This is to be already in the passage that leads to our heavenly Father's inner apartments, where mansions are prepared for all his adopted seed. May the fulness of the Spirit's influence, through the mighty God and Prince of Peace, rest upon you.....

Your affectionate Father,
JOHN STEVENS.

good Hannah may be given to her, that health and hope, patience and strength, may be abundantly imparted.

I am, till death, my dear Son,
Your affectionate Father,

JOHN KEENE.

LETTER 40.

TO THE SAME.

May 31, 1827.

My dear Son,

..... Sometimes I am greatly cast down through the hidings of the Lord's face, and the withdrawals of the Comforter: this is my greatest affliction—this I feel myself least resigned to of any, and yet I often exclaim, O Lord, thou owest me nothing; thou hast an indisputable right to do as thou wilt with thy poor dependent worm, with thy constantly sinning servant. Though I groan under my griefs, I still love and adore my God, in covenant with me, by the blood of my Surety, and aim to rest on his veracity and faithfulness, till his presence returns to revive me.

His goodness is infinite above all my frailties and my faults. The system of his wisdom is delightful to behold in the rays of Immanuel's face. His plan of displaying his equal attributes in the *absolute*, just, and *endless* salvation of his chosen people, demands our steady confidence and our cheerful gratitude. Who but a God could have devised the constitution of our Redeemer's person? Two infinitely different natures being inseparably, though ineffably joined therein. Great, indeed, is this fundamental branch of the mystery of godliness. And to contrive it so that the person constituted should become the medium of exhibiting every other branch of christian truth; this is admirably calculated to render him the centre of light, sanctity, and joy: a most proper centre around which to revolve the whole new creation, as the earth and other planets move around the influential orb of day. How wisely has the God of heaven secured his own glory by this stupendous scheme of perfecting many in One, and making One the fulness of many. Union is thus secured and perpetuated; and though this

celestial Sun may be oft obscured, like the natural ruler of the day, it is never divided from the system of the spiritual world.

How sweetly do the *relations* of the Son of God to his Father and to his brethren, bind heaven and earth together! How fitly, herein, did infinite wisdom and love provide a basis on which to raise the whole fabric of the mystic temple, so that it might ever endure, and be the fitted habitation of God in its union with the glory-man, as the holiest of all. Whatever the lapsed state of the election of grace might need in the dispensation of the fulness of times, the relations of the Son of God were quite sufficient to supply. His every office, likewise, is a sacred channel through which the measureless fulness of his person, as the Son of God is shed forth, for the enjoyment of his ransomed church and regenerate people. Light, liberty, and protection are daily proceeding hence, to the sanctifying and governing of the new creation, through the official energies of the Holy Spirit. These official outlets of his undiminishable fulness, invite our daily attention, for to these our faith and hope are directed for every needful supply. The irradiating knowledge imparted through his prophetic office, by means of an orderly, connected, and consistent system of truths, is transforming and delightful. Hence we come to have the mind of Christ, and to possess the light of life. His sanctifying priesthood is a charming theme to the enlightened sinner: by this truth he becomes sanctified and free. Herein he acquires nearness to the eternal Majesty, and boldness to tell his errand, and frequently gains a cheering answer to his prayers. By faith he draws near under the blood of sprinkling. His kingly office clothes the former with dignity and efficiency, and throws a shield of protection around the spiritual worshipper, while presenting his spiritual sacrifice at the feet of Almighty Majesty. Thus, my son, may you ever adore, in light, sanctity, and safety, and Jesus be your way, your trust, and your life. This is to be already in the passage that leads to our heavenly Father's inner apartments, where mansions are prepared for all his adopted seed. May the fulness of the Spirit's influence, through the mighty God and Prince of Peace, rest upon you.....

Your affectionate Father,
JOHN STEVENS.

good Hannah may be given to her, that health and hope, patience and strength, may be abundantly imparted.

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Your affectionate Father,
JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 40.

TO THE SAME.

May 31, 1827.

My dear Son,

..... Sometimes I am greatly cast down through the hidings of the Lord's face, and the withdrawals of the Comforter: this is my greatest affliction—this I feel myself least resigned to of any, and yet I often exclaim, O Lord, thou owest me nothing; thou hast an indisputable right to do as thou wilt with thy poor dependent worm, with thy constantly sinning servant. Though I groan under my griefs, I still love and adore my God, in covenant with me, by the blood of my Surety, and aim to rest on his veracity and faithfulness, till his presence returns to revive me.

His goodness is infinite above all my frailties and my faults. The system of his wisdom is delightful to behold in the rays of Immanuel's face. His plan of displaying his equal attributes in the *absolute*, just, and *endless* salvation of his chosen people, demands our steady confidence and our cheerful gratitude. Who but a God could have devised the constitution of our Redeemer's person? Two infinitely different natures being inseparably, though ineffably joined therein. Great, indeed, is this fundamental branch of the mystery of godliness. And to contrive it so that the person constituted should become the medium of exhibiting every other branch of christian truth; this is admirably calculated to render him the centre of light, sanctity, and joy: a most proper centre around which to revolve the whole new creation, as the earth and other planets move around the influential orb of day. How wisely has the God of heaven secured his own glory by this stupendous scheme of perfecting many in One, and making One the fulness of many. Union is thus secured and perpetuated; and though this

with its ten thousand forms of acting, to the scrutinizing eye of the Deity itself. The Lord the Spirit ever maintain this safe—this pious measure in each of our hearts and lives, till we reach that blessed state where sin is not admitted, and such a prayer is not needed: where the light is perfect day, and the hearts of all the inhabitants correspond with the governing will of their reigning King, for ever....

Your affectionate Father,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 42.

TO THE SAME.

May 14, 1830.

My dear Son,

..... We are all well through great mercy,—and our friends are as usual—we are in peace at Salem, and keep increasing greatly as a church. I hope you will be so happy as to see your new place erected without any strife, or offence, and that you will all flock together under cover like harmless doves, when the court is made ready. May the great Maker of ministers increasingly fit you to fill your station with pleasure to yourself—with acceptance to your friends—and with honour to your Lord. The office is fearfully important—may you ever be clothed with humility, and modestly cover your face and your feet: Isaiah vi. 2. How do you get on with the lesson that was recently alluded to?—“*Though I be nothing.*” I hope you will be a proficient in that and in all kindred scholarship: it is ornamental, rare, and useful learning. Be attentive to a practical use of sentiments, and a sentimental use of practicals. Neither neglect seed-time, nor fail to look out for the harvest. Be as careful to offer thanks as ever you are anxious to ask for favours. “Whoso offereth praise glorifieth the Lord,” what think you of these words?—“Sanctify the Lord of hosts himself; let him be your fear, and let him be your dread!” This may be safely said, that none can sanctify him, but those whom he has sanctified. When he sanctifies, he makes us what we were not—when he is sanctified, we daily acknowledge him to be what he is. In sanctifying

ing love to your registered person and blood-bought rights. His tender heart ever rules the acts of his all-powerful hand. Though wasting disease seem chief efficient, it is still very evident that he is *only* a commanded servant to the Lord of all saints. He that raised the temporary tent of wearing materials, himself fixed the period of its standing, and *when*, *where*, and *how* it should be dissolved. Nor will he permit it to be taken down, otherwise than *as he pleases*, and *as in his sight*.

He that is ascended, is exalted as a Prince and a Saviour. He is a Saviour still, and though he suffers the body to decay, and may permit much pain for the moment, yet he keeps his *eye* upon the jewel in the casket, while the chest is unjointing, and all its curiously wrought connections and parts are undoing! He may *seem* to have no regard to the body; but he really has, and will not fail to put honour upon it finally, as his own purchased and consecrated residence. But it is destroyed to be preserved; it is degraded to be exalted; it is hid in the earth to be finally exhibited in heaven!

His *first* attention is to the immortal spirit that is about to enter upon a new habitation. As when saints are baptized, we commonly attend to the drying and fresh clothing of the person who is being stripped of his wet garments, and throw aside, *for the present*, his burial clothes, which are afterwards sought after, and refitted for his use. So the Lord of life eternal seems to do with our poor bodies, which are all that he permits, in fact, to be buried, and these he will get ready for us after we are wholly freed from death, so as for it to have no more dominion over us.

The period of dissolution, or of unhousing us, is mostly a distressing one in itself; but we are encouraged by the idea that we are going to be settled in a better mansion, and to be occupiers of an ancient settlement; and that it is a freehold; and therefore we shall never be distressed more by leases ending, and new trouble about our residence. You have been moved to and fro, my dear sister, ... your Lord has been speaking to you some years by one person, or thing, and another; but now he is going to change the mediums of communication between you and him, and even to speak to you himself face to face!!!

Should your lamp be dim, and the glass of your lantern seem as if it had been smoked, call upon your guide, take

his safe counsel, and rest satisfied that if you can see very little, he can see very clearly, and you know you cannot *both* be lost; and I feel persuaded you cannot be parted. And this, I dare say, is your persuasion too.

Gather your ready-wrought robe about you, and bind it as close as your little strength can allow you to do; and ask the Comforter to *fasten it* for you, and you need not fear; but so clad the Lord will *know* you, and present you before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy.

This probably is the last communication from that servant of your Lord,* by whose humble efforts he has often invigorated your spirit, and extended your views of his glorious person and work in by-gone days: days fraught with pledges not now to be thrown away. Farewell in Jesus—my dear sister, farewell. Peace be with you, all peace, blood-made peace, ratified peace, endless peace. “He is our peace.” He is Lord of all. Shortly I must follow; the Lord help me—the Lord help you: as thy days thy strength shall be in Him. In bonds that defy the destroying hand of death,

I remain for ever,

Your brother and joint heir in Jesus,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 37.

TO HIS SON, MR. JOHN STEVENS, JUN., SOON AFTER
HIS MARRIAGE.

Aug. 12, 1825.

My dear Son,

Having opportunity of conveying a line by Mr. S., I embrace it.....I was glad to hear of your safe arrival with your dear companion, and of the safety of your furniture; and also that Mr. Fairy was so well. May the good Lord be ever with you all, and render you great blessings to one another.

I trust the hand of God is in it, and that he will smile upon your every lawful attempt, in all your earthly affairs. Daily implore his blessing on all you do, and offer daily thanks for every mercy, and by thus marking his dealings,

* This was Mr. Stevens's last letter to his friend, Susannah Pearson, who departed this life, October 14, 1847.

you will have continual incitement to love and praise his holy name. Thus will your daily duties prove your daily privileges, and your faith and hope will be promoted in the very business of the world.

Life, my dear children, is fraught with many vexations and cares: never flatter yourselves, nor give way to a dispirited frame of mind. Act your parts, and aim to be useful. You will never want for a few friends, and should they be fewer than you may have expected, be content; your heavenly Father numbered them for you, before you entered the turning paths of this ever shortening life. Let his character ever dwell upon your minds; it will mightily tend to fashion yours aright. He is your tender Father; he is your faithful Friend: be ye followers and imitators of him, and leave all the result with him. Make a friend of him by casting all your care upon him. He *trieth* the righteous, but he never forsakes them. Never let the things of this world thrust aside those of the next: remember you are always going to your graves, and to the presence of your God. Attend his throne in private, keep his truth in view, frequent his ordinances, and watch your spirits in them.

Studiously cultivate the principle of self-government. So to do will save you much pain and shame. Be dutiful and kind to one another, and to every branch of your family connection: especially evidence a due veneration and regard for your venerable parent in his solitary state, and in his passing through the few remaining days of his pilgrimage. God has helped him to the close of a long life, and blessed him with a good report through faith. Aim to secure the like by every prudential means in your power. It is of more worth than gold; yea, than much fine gold.

Should any one of you be permitted for a moment to lose the just balance of your temper, watch that it be met either with silence, or with good humour. Pretend not to debate in anger: wait for a more favourable moment. Think first, then speak slowly, and accustom yourselves to put the best construction possible on one another's words and ways. In a word, study the things that make for peace, and whereby one may edify another.....I am bearing in mind the idea of coming somehow to see you all together, if the Lord permit.....

From your affectionate Father,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 38.

TO THE SAME.

Nov. 15, 1825.

My dear Son,

I thank you and yours for the friendly present received —better ducks never need to come to any table. I was glad to hear that you were pretty well, and my good friends with whom God's unerring providence has united you. May his sanctifying and enriching blessing rest upon you all, night and day: thus will you pass on through life's meandering path in safety, and reach the rest remaining, as good pilgrims, under the guidance of the God of all your mercies.

This life is at best but introductory to being. A seven years' apprenticeship, compared with seventy years, is thought but a short time: but much more fleeting must the whole introductory period of man's minority on earth appear, when compared with the end for which he is here placed! O my dear son, ever keep eternity in view, and aim constantly to remember your *chief end*, in following duly the *interposing means*. Let time's affairs have your truly attentive service *subordinately*; but never suffer them to retain in your mind the *supreme place*, which belongs inalienably to the things of *eternity*. Observe, your trials and diversified toils are measured by time: your highest relations, privileges, and joys, by *eternity*. Here the balance is ineffably in your favour; remember this in pain, in bereavement, in profit and loss, and in all earthly possessions; they are measured by time. But your future prospects, with which your present spiritual hope and enjoyments are *inseparably* connected, are measured and determined by a boundless eternity! This is cause for gratitude and joy. Thus reasoned the chief of sinners: "Our *light affliction*," said he, "is but *for a moment*;" while the object we pursue is an *eternal* weight of glory. "I reckon," he cries, "that the sufferings of this present life or time, are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us." And by sufferings, he did not restrain his thoughts to such trifling trials as *we* are apt to fret under. See 2 Cor. xi. 23, 31. God has blessed you in early life with a companion who fears God; with a consequent family connection which has long professed interest in his altar and his throne. He

LETTER 45.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 28, 1830.

My dear Son,

Rest assured my seldom writing is not because I seldom think of you, or because I am indifferent to your welfare, for both are impossible to my heart; and you know my habit of giving much time to my studies for the pulpit, from which long established custom I seem unable to desist, and find no disposition to pray for ability to change my course. Many interruptions must arise from the necessity of obliging friends at times with my company. O that when I do, I may ever remember to improve the opportunity afforded, for helping my people forward in knowledge, and in all judgment to their profit, to my own credit, and above all to my Lord's praise.

Private interviews should be used to help our public ministry, to convince our hearers of our sincerity, and that we live ourselves on the truths we offer to their attention, and to which we labour to gain their serious adherence. Many popular ministers, it is to be feared, have become dis-esteemed when privately known. People may and will form their judgments of their ministers much by their private behaviour; and though a man's ability were ever so brilliantly displayed in the pulpit, if in the chair he becomes ridiculous, haughty, peevish, or vain, he will soon lose all influence on the serious part of his connections. It is just he should. There is great reason to fear that great faculties, if not employed for some good purpose, will be very apt to further some evil. Empty, detracting, light, and foolish conversation eats out all comfort instantly, and opens a wide door for other evils to rush in. For as one grace will tend to introduce another, so, one folly or fault will tend to induce another. The care must be to be lively without being light; to be child-like without being childish. A sullen, silent, morose, and censorious behaviour cannot fail to be injurious and highly offensive: a noisy loquacity, and readiness to be heard before and in spite of all, is nothing better, and usually indicates an unenviable temper and an undisciplined mind. When you meet with a man of this cast, be as determined to be silent as he is to be loquacious and intrusive; except a sententious observa-

tion can be hit upon in a few words that may muffle his clapper!

Your people are such as will require you to be very explicit in the manner of your discussions, and in all the language you adopt. An old bishop used to say, "It is needful that a minister should consider himself in the place of the most illiterate." Whitefield used to say, *the style of the market was best*; and with due care to avoid coarse and vulgar expressions, no doubt his idea will mostly prove correct. Paul's remark deserves to be marked, and especially as he was a learned and an inspired minister: 1 Cor. xiv. 18, 19; and ii. 4, 5. Use all learning in private that you can, but let it come out in simplicity, perspicuity, and dexterity in making hard things easy; and thus your hearers will reap the benefit of your attainments, and through them God will be glorified. Then is learning best employed when it serves as the handmaid of truth, and is not allowed to take the uppermost place. The works of nature show their Author, but they are not the book that faith chiefly concerns, and in which salvation appears. Nor can the humble disciples of Jesus understand that book; nor is the Holy Spirit engaged to assist them in making the attempt, nor would it save their consciences from guilt if they did understand it. God in Christ is our subject—his holy word is our medium of true knowledge: herein the perfections of the Eternal shine in a new edition of them; and the display is connected with the heaven of heavens. Herein is the sphere of the Holy Spirit's operations. Here all the relations of eternal grace are laid open—all the offices of incarnate God are pouring out the ocean of goodness through the broad channel of absolute redemption, under the directing and efficient energy of the eternal Spirit. Herein, my dear son, let us resolve to keep our standing, and to spend our labour and our days...

Your affectionate father,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 46.

TO THE SAME.

I hope this may find you well, with your dear wife and babes, and that your friends are well and in peace.

Be sure you preach the truth *as it is in Jesus*. This is the only truth that befits the pulpit before dying men—men lost by nature—men accountable to a just Judge and supreme Lord—men needing and desiring help on their way to an awful interview with their Maker and Saviour, and with the inhabitants of the upper world. Be sure you do not forget the illiteracy of your auditory—be as a child with children—be a man with men. To fit poor sinners ministerially for the final world of joy is the highest office, and the most exalted honour that can be conferred on a minister. Forget not that your chief honour must be waited for, and is reserved beyond the grave. If you ramble into the plains of nature, be sure you don't pitch your tent there. Gospel mysteries are what the Holy Ghost is engaged to testify of and to work by. . . . You come forward, my dear son, under advantages your poor father had no knowledge of in his beginnings—O be thankful. Watch the latent pride and vanity of your own heart, and this will make you more expert in detecting and exposing those evils in others. Aim to be spiritual in all your labours. Let learning be your handmaid only, let the mystery of Christ be as your wedded wife. Take time by the forelock—you know not what hindrances may arise hereafter. Be determined to have a reading knowledge of Latin, and a critical knowledge of the originals: ever treat them with all solemnity as the word of God. Let the people rather see the effects of your learning than learning itself. Bring it before them in the clearness, depth, and fulness of your knowledge of divine things. This will suit them—this will leave your conscience at rest—this will evince you a good minister of Christ. Be more concerned for your Holy Master to shine in all your preaching, than to shine yourself. Ever count your honour safe and large in maintaining *his*. I need not say, "I live if *you* stand fast in the Lord." You do not doubt my deep concern for your christian character and your official consistency, and good reputation as a minister of our exalted Lord. God bless you, my beloved son in the Lord.

Your father,

JOHN STEVENS.

Our kind love to Fanny, with yourself and the dear young ones. I hope John the third is a good boy.

LETTER 47.

TO MRS. JOHN STEVENS.

On the bereavement occasioned by the death of her beloved husband.

May 16, 1831.

My dear Daughter,

The Lord be praised for his kindness and his care over you and the dear children. I was glad to hear of your safe arrival at St. Neots, and that the Willingham friends shewed their kindness to the last. See the hand of God, my dear, in all this; the answer of prayer in your mercies given and continued. This merciful God will still be our God for ever and ever, and our safe guide unto death.

Our times are in his hand—our friends are in his keeping—our enemies under his control—and all our events ever in his view. His ears are ever open to our cry, while his eyes are continually upon us. Nor will he, nor can he forget his humble petitioners, or once despise their prayers. O what a mercy is the mercy-seat of our all-merciful God! How sweet the thought that he is always mindful of our best interests, nor overlooks our deep-felt sighs. “Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.” Kindly he exhorts us to call upon his name in a day of trouble, adding his gracious promise that he will hear us, help us, and deliver us, and cause us to glorify him for all his goodness, so efficiently and so seasonably extended to us. O magnify this holy Lord with me.

Right glad was I to find that your mind was upheld in his favour, and that you could still speak to his praise. Long may the savour of his name remain; unto death may his friendship be repeated on your tongue. Frequent his throne—watch against a negligent, indifferent frame of mind—wish for no such ease as that which heedlessness and carnal diversion might seem to bring. What help you gain by faith in the Scriptures, and by ardent prayer, will never disappoint your hope. Hard earned privileges are wont to be dearly prized and long remembered.

Expect great things from the God of all grace: he measures not his communications by the will of his creatures, but worketh ALL things after the counsel of his own will.

you will have continual incitement to love and praise his holy name. Thus will your daily duties prove your daily privileges, and your faith and hope will be promoted in the very business of the world.

Life, my dear children, is fraught with many vexations and cares: never flatter yourselves, nor give way to a dispirited frame of mind. Act your parts, and aim to be useful. You will never want for a few friends, and should they be fewer than you may have expected, be content; your heavenly Father numbered them for you, before you entered the turning paths of this ever shortening life. Let his character ever dwell upon your minds; it will mightily tend to fashion yours aright. He is your tender Father; he is your faithful Friend: be ye followers and imitators of him, and leave all the result with him. Make a friend of him by casting all your care upon him. He *trieth* the righteous, but he never forsakes them. Never let the things of this world thrust aside those of the next: remember you are always going to your graves, and to the presence of your God. Attend his throne in private, keep his truth in view, frequent his ordinances, and watch your spirits in them.

Studiously cultivate the principle of self-government. So to do will save you much pain and shame. Be dutiful and kind to one another, and to every branch of your family connection: especially evidence a due veneration and regard for your venerable parent in his solitary state, and in his passing through the few remaining days of his pilgrimage. God has helped him to the close of a long life, and blessed him with a good report through faith. Aim to secure the like by every prudential means in your power. It is of more worth than gold; yea, than much fine gold.

Should any one of you be permitted for a moment to lose the just balance of your temper, watch that it be met either with silence, or with good humour. Pretend not to debate in anger: wait for a more favourable moment. Think first, then speak slowly, and accustom yourselves to put the best construction possible on one another's words and ways. In a word, study the things that make for peace, and whereby one may edify another. I am bearing in mind the idea of coming somehow to see you all together, if the Lord permit.

From your affectionate Father,

JOHN STEVENS.

cannot forget you and the dear children. I was mercifully preserved through my journey, and found all well at home, and so we still remain through mercy. Health and ease, with a multitude of other mercies we are too apt to overlook, through their *commonness*, and to forget the offering of due gratitude. Our minds are more apt to be struck with the extraordinary events of kind providence, and yet every-day affairs shew us our God continually, were we but mindful of them, and must therefore be more suited to maintain a regular course of devotedness to God. Yet alas! we, as it were, sail on the ocean, and see not the mighty deep that bears us up. Surrounded with daily benefits, we are often saying, when will the Lord's mercies appear?

He knoweth our faultiness and bears with our murmurings, in the greatness of his love, and the riches of his mercy. He is a Father all merciful, and multiplies the expressions of his pardoning love. I hope you are living daily in a conscious dependence on his paternal care and support:—casting *all* your care upon him, for he careth for you: 1 Pet. v. 6, 7. The Lord will be your shield and portion: Gen. xv. 1; Psa. lxxxiv. 11. He has said he will never forsake his people who put their trust in his wisdom, goodness, faithfulness, and power. Your recumbency on his care will be best evinced by repeated and continued *commitment* of all your affairs to his managing hand. He will be as good as his word for ever, and he will keep his truth unto all generations. May his sanctifying blessing rest upon you, and renew your strength according to your day. May his endless mercy appear in early days in your dear children, and may we all meet, after the tribulations of this shortening life are ended, where Jesus has prepared for all his friends. He has entered the heavenly places as our forerunner, and lives to carry on the cause of all his believing, expecting followers. Yes, Fanny, he ever liveth to intercede for us, and to present us in the coverings of his own righteous deeds. He wrought the obedience, we wear it as our dignifying dress. O reflect, my dear, on the sinless character, expiating sufferings and holy services of our blessed Lord and Christ, which enter into and compose the ineffably glorious and unstainable robe of righteousness, in which you are professing to be clad. This is the basis of our discharge, and the honourable ground of our acceptance unto life eter-

has given you a comfortable measure of human learning for your help and convenience, with a little of the valuables of this life to acquire your support on the earth; he has done more, for he has given you the fear of his name, which is better than great riches; yea, he has given you himself in covenant for ever. Now, my son, how can you sufficiently serve, honour, and extol the God of heaven! You are insolvent, as sure as you are born, and will never become independent as long as you live. But never lament this, glory in it, talk about it, muse upon it, be thankful for it, and when you get to your last house, you will find all your neighbours like yourself.

Be opposed to that insinuating old gin-maker, who so artfully seduced your grandmother. When he urges you to discontent by setting forth your difficulties, vexations, and losses, and tries to fix your attention on your disadvantages, be as contrary as possible, and begin to count over your benefits, and review your mercies. If he is for flattering you, and stirring you up to think something of yourself, begin to protest you are *nothing*: *I am nothing*, exclaimed the greatest of good men. "Though I be nothing," said he, (2 Cor. xii. 11) "yet am I not behind the very chiefest of the apostles. May you be great in littleness, and little in greatness." Then shall the Lord be honoured, and you will not be injured. Keep close to the throne of God, watch your words and ways, and aim to attain a good degree of self-government. This will lessen your difficulty in passing through society, and save you many a pang. Study well the life of faith, and aim to exemplify it. And the God of peace be with you, be your God for ever, and your guide unto death.....

I remain, your affectionate Father,

JOHN STEVENS.

God bless you and all the family. My love to Fanny, &c.

LETTER 39.

TO THE SAME.

April 7, 1827.

My dear Son,

..... My heel continues painful when I bear on it,

and neither gets better nor worse, that I can discover. I often find my head frequently troubled with darting pains. But I am now counting how great my mercy has been that I am not always in pain, that I have had my feet so many years without lameness, and that my holy, adored Lord has reasons for suffering all my frailties. I would rather have them absent, apart from their uses; but if they are come as admonishers, as warnings, and to excite my attention to eternal things, I dare not say much about their removal, but with caution, and by asking my heavenly Father to judge what is best for me. I often suppose my continuance on earth may not be long; but human imagination is lighter than vapour, and often unfounded. I could wish to be useful while I stay, be humbled under a sense of my many mercies, live nearer to my best Friend, and be less concerned about the bursting bubbles that float around me. But I am lean and poor in the sight of plenty. I hope my grand-daughter Mary is well: the name to me must ever be dear, under certain associations. May the Spirit of the Lord bring her to say, though I be gone from hearing her say it, "My soul doth magnify the Lord, and my spirit doth rejoice in God *my* Saviour." O what is all this retiring scene of things around us, compared with a spark of undying grace in the heart! an image of Christ in the mind! a copy of God's covenant in the judgment and affections! a joyful hope of an incorruptible inheritance! and a patient submission to all the governing will of God! These are a portion that will never draw the heart from the right centre, will in no way injure the possessor. It is your lot, my dear son, I trust, to have these things in remembrance and admiration.

Ever estimate eternal things most highly. Mind that your every natural comfort be used as a stream from the great source, to guide your way to it. God's voice in all he gives is, Come to me, come nearer to me; never would any wealth or prosperity injure any man, did he hear and obey the voice of God therein. He never intends us to think that the aboundings of his communications are to be set up between us and himself, like the cursed calves of Jeroboam. O no! quite the contrary; we are to see him in all our mercies, and love and praise him more.

Express my kind love to Fanny. O that the spirit of

LETTER 50.

TO THE SAME.

Aug. 29, 1832.

My dear Daughter,

.... Another year ! who may live to see it ? we may have no interest in what is done here, in far less time than that. Death is sweeping off our neighbours daily, and we know not how soon his mission may refer to us ; yet,

“ Not one single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit.”

I am hoping that you and the dear children are well, and that you are living in the good hope of the gospel of God : it has pleased the Father of all mercies to give you a name and a place in his house below, in order to prepare you for his house above. He has given you what thousands have never had, and what you can never lose, nor be deprived of by the hand of others. Measureless love has undertaken to purvey for you, and infinite wisdom has engaged to direct your way. What can you want that *such* love cannot afford ? that *such* wisdom cannot secure ? From your infant hours the child of prayers, and the object of indulgent providence : can you be thankful enough ? Thus far through the path of life your steps have been upheld, unprevented sorrow has rolled in upon you, the boisterous waves have carried off part of your possessions ; but not before it had become incapable of administering to your happiness and aid, nor before far higher objects demanded the affecting change. We are born for the glory of God, and to serve him in the future world, rather than in this sublunary state. This we are too apt to overlook, and from an earthly cast of disposition, and a selfishness natural to us, we are too ready to prefer our gratification to the glory of God, and to the highest welfare of our dearest Friend. Natural affection is unable to soar above its natural sphere, and hence we find a contradiction in ourselves, and while we wish to walk with God we find *a heart and a heart* ; and learn how hard a thing it is to fully deny our natural propensities, in compliance with our spiritual duties, and celestial prospects. When we would follow the dictates of the Holy Spirit, again nature pours in her influence like the inbreaking of the sea, through a breach in the bank,

that should defend the land from its encroachments, and we are deluged and overwhelmed with its force. Thus we learn how frail we are, and how much we need the constant, superadded aid of the Holy Spirit, to maintain our heavenly frame and standing, and to enable us to prefer the Creator's will and honour to the creature's charms. To enjoy all things in and for God, and to his glory, is an eminence of life to which with difficulty we arrive. Yet this becomes us, this we profess to do, this is our highest advantage, and without this our sorrows must become very weighty, and we are in great danger of becoming disquieted in vain. *In vain*, I say, for what can *we* alter for the better? What improvement can we make in the plans of infinite understanding? What right can we mortals have to set up ourselves as chief ends for which all things ought to be controlled? We herein arrogate to ourselves the rights of Deity, ere we are aware of it, and murmur that all things are not ordered for our gratification. O the sweet, the serene life of submission to the holy mind of God! "*Thy will be done*," is a prayer that, when felt, cannot but attest the petitioner is a placid-minded man. The Lord bless you with grace to be willing that he shall choose your inheritance for you....

Give my love to all the children and all friends, and believe me,

Your affectionate Father,

J. STEVENS.

LETTER 51.

TO THE SAME.

May 22, 1834.

My dear Daughter,

I find I must have the first word; your not writing, however, indicates that you have no very bad news to communicate. I hope, at least, that you and the dear children are well, we are here as usual, blessed with health and bread, notwithstanding our sins and unworthiness, and while many know not where to turn for succour. It is, I am certain, not our merit that has caused our lot to fall in pleasant places. Merit we have none. But our God will have

mercy on whom he will, and sheds his bounties according to his free goodness, thus we come in among the unworthy recipients of his bounty Your dwelling must be pleasant now, as the fields and plants around appear dressed in living green, and decked in living beauty. A lesson for you, can you but read it; for it shews how external comeliness should be assumed from an inward and hidden life, or power of action. Fair clothing might be put upon a dead body, but how unseemly and useless! Put ye on the Lord Jesus Christ, said the blessed apostle, and make not provision for the flesh, to fulfil the lusts thereof: Rom. xiii. 14.

It likewise seems to remind us of the glory to be put on in the morning of the resurrection, when the saints shall be clad in all the beauty of an unfading immortality of body, resembling that of Christ himself. A body of life and spirituality adapted to endless duration; for there shall be no more death. A body not requiring meat or rest, nor subject to infirmity by age. A body without any failing senses. Blindness and deafness will never be known, pain and sickness will wholly be gone: Rev. xxi. 4. This hope, and this honour, have all his saints. Babes and heroes are equally included in this final promotion. O glorious hope! O blessed end! . . . O love the Lord, my daughter; in him put all your trust, on him cast all your care, to him tell all your griefs. He has promised more than you have ever imagined, and loved you with a love that can never be expressed, but will ever be expressing. Keep close to his word, his throne, his worship, and cultivate a due respect for his people, ever viewing them and yourself as sinners saved by grace.

Ever your affectionate Father,

J. STEVENS.

LETTER 52.

TO THE SAME.

Aug. 4, 1834.

My dear Daughter,

So many are my engagements at this season of the year, that you must not wonder at not hearing from me.

. I have not a week without some extra engagement,

but then it is to serve him who suffered for us, therefore it would ill become me to be disquieted about it. Life cannot be spent so well as in his service, nor death be met with advantage, but in his name. I suppose that no saint will finally regret that he has gone of his errands, or any way served his interest. How little are all our doings when viewed in the light of his! What is our love but a mere shadow of love when compared with his unspeakable love? The sight of him makes the tallest saint appear only a pigmy: before that noble cedar, the best grown trees appear shrubs of smallest growth. The comparison wants strength, for before HIM all saints are nothings and vanities.

It is, however, a mercy beyond measure if we can say, *By grace we are what we are*. Yet this, I trust, we can say with abasement before the throne of Almighty God. It is not by grace that we are sinners, but it is by grace that we have any proper sense of our sinnership. The shining of the sun may make known a thief, but it can never make a thief. The light of the gospel discovers many sins to us, but it never generates any evil in us. We may seem to ourselves worse than we were, under its irradiating brightness, but in fact we are only more distinctly apprised of our condition. The gospel of rich mercy and sure redemption does no harm, though many injuries are endured by its admirers.

Even the law of God never injures us, for not the holy law, but the sin that it forbids, is the cause of our pains and fears. Justice never frowned on innocence, nor condemned the guilty, but for and according to their guilt. Even Jesus, who "knew no sin," could not have suffered, had not guilt been laid to his charge. Therefore all enmity to God must originate with the guiltiness of the creature at enmity; for were he not guilty, he would never be an enemy to God's law and government. Men find fault with God's ways, but it is because those ways are holy, just, and good. His dealings often appear to us to be very strange, but this is because we are not of his mind. And can we dare to say that it is best for us to choose our own inheritance? See Psalm xlvii. 14.

Our sorrows are increased by the unfit temper with which we are apt to bear them, and by the misconstruction we put upon them. They are always consistent with divine love, and not unnecessary to the welfare of his people. He has

often made the evil of suffering prevent the evil of sinning. He studies our profit rather than our pleasure, and fits us for a crown by accustoming us to a cross.

Read the word—try your thoughts and tempers by it—pray for what it commends—deprecate what it condemns—plead the promises—watch against any evil temper—always put the most favourable construction you can upon what may seem the faults of your acquaintances. They may have infirmities and sinful propensities to struggle with, which have not been permitted to try you. Use yourself to say, in your reflecting moments, My soul, if these are not thy foibles and faults, *what are thine?* Be more severe with yourself than others—forgive them sooner. Sin is your worst enemy, so reckon it—Christ is your great Friend, to him I commend you—with him I leave you. There I trust myself.

Your affectionate Father,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 53.

TO THE SAME.

On the death of two of her children.

Jan. 27, 1835.

My dear Daughter,

I was very glad to hear that your trouble had a little subsided, and that the dear girl was having that distressing complaint in a mild manner. She will, I hope, be spared to be your companion, and some comfort to you in this vale of tears and trials.

It has pleased our Almighty Father to remove two parts out of three, of your care and trust, and I hope you will see and say that he hath done well for you, and well by your children. It is right to feel and shew a mother's heart, but then it should be with the temper of a dutiful daughter of the Lord God Almighty. Short is this pilgrimage, and soon will the ground be overstepped. Act your part willingly, without anxiously wishing to have your own will. The trouble you have escaped by privation of your dear children, is I expect greater than can be imagined. The

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Lord knew what was best for you and yours. He has done it—had you inflicted the disease, you would have been much more distressed; but now you can say, It is the Lord, he hath done as it hath pleased him; let his name be magnified. Learn to give him all, and he will give you sufficient for your best interest, and his highest praise. I hope by this time Mary is getting out of the trouble, and that her dear bestormed mother is beholding a more serene sky. The Lord still reigneth, and, with undiminished love and mercy, watches your trembling steps.

He will strengthen you through your trials, and learn you to live more above the earth. "Let not your heart be troubled," said our tender-hearted Lord. Do not set your heart on trifles; they are going when they come, and are but little while they stay. Give yourself up more to prayer and meditation on the highest things. Your hands are now more released, your circumstances are quite sufficient, your friends are around you, your enemies are in chains of restriction, your afflictions are numbered and measured by a loving Father, a living Saviour, and an indwelling Comforter. O see! Fanny, see! what mercies you have!

Besides, you have a name in heaven, and a home there when this changing life is ended. Christ himself is on your side—his holy angels are your friends on his account. The house of your divine Father is open at all hours, that you may step in by ejaculatory prayers, and pass on in your daily concerns. The Lord fit us by his Spirit, his word, and his providences, to honour him more and more on the earth; and finally in the heavens of knowledge, love, and joy, without sin, fear, frailty, sorrow, or death, for ever and ever. Amen and Amen.

Your affectionate Father,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 54.

TO THE SAME.

June 16, 1823.

My dear Daughter,

I was glad to hear that you were in better spirits, and that my visit had been in some degree the means of it. We

live to do good and enjoy good, and to glorify God in all things. O that we may not forget the end of our being, or the Author of our bliss. Short and transitory are all things here, very short is our stay on earth, but the next state is without end: of his kingdom there is no end. He shall reign for ever and ever. His priesthood is everlasting, "who is made not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life:" Heb. vii. 16.

O what a settlement is that! what a priesthood is here! what a state of safe interest is this, in which our nature is worn by God himself, and made the manifesting medium of his glory; and at the same time the channel of all communicable blessedness to countless hosts of Adam's family. O grace—grace—grace, what hast thou not done! what heights of wisdom! what depths of mercy! what breadths of grace! what lengths of love are here! And is man thus in favour with the great, the holy, the highest, the eternal God? Verily so, he would have it so.

What wonders of love we behold,
No mortal its glories can trace;
Nor spirit angelic unfold,
The heights or the depths of his grace.

O come, let us sing unto the Lord, let us sound forth his name in our praises. God *our* Saviour. How came this? And are we saved? Is it a fact, or is it a fancy? What has he done for you, my daughter? Has he done any thing special for you above the daughters of men? Has he done any thing in you that he has not done for all the women at St. Neots? You know he has, you say he has, you feel he has; and were the question moved, and did he again say, *Lovest thou me more than those do?* you are prepared to say, "Yea, Lord, thou knowest that I love thee," because thou hast loved me even to death, the death of the cross.

"Oh! for this love let rocks and hills,
Their lasting silence break:
And all harmonious human tongues,
Their Saviour's praises speak."

But alas! alas! with what unstrung harps and doleful ditties have we followed this God our Saviour, who loved us, and sent us the epistle of his love, written with his own blood; and has often held a light for us to read by, and assisted our understandings to receive his kind instructions

and valuable love-gifts ! Let us try and praise him, Fanny, in the rest of our days !

Let earth and all its trifles go,
Give us, O Lord, thy love to know ;
Give us thy precious love.
And when we arrive in the sight of his throne,
We will praise him for ever for all he has done.

.....My many engagements will not leave me time to say more than that I remain,

Your affectionate Father,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 55.

TO THE SAME.

Feb. 9, 1836.

My dear Daughter,

.....The family is drawing home, and the great promised meeting must shortly arrive, when all the chosen of our God shall be gathered to their rest, and the wonders of redemption will be finally displayed, and the final state be opened to the view of all the just, Christ being present as their Head, Saviour, and Lord. For this most holy and triumphant appearance, let us be looking hopefully, and though we shall both have passed the deep of death before, yet it now is enjoyed *as a certainty* by faith, and is intended to influence our lives, and brighten our prospects.

"Faith sets time past in present view,
Brings distant prospects home,
Of things a thousand years ago,
Or thousand years to come."

This fleeting existence is of little worth, save as it is sanctified, and made introductory to that better state, called the kingdom and glory of God. Indeed, whatever glorifies God has its use, but we cannot but feel chiefly concerned in that ordained scheme of eternal wisdom, by which he is exalted and praised in our salvation. He is our chief good, and claims our highest love and endless adoration. To *be* for him, to *act* for him, to suffer *for* his name, cannot but

shed honour on our otherwise insignificant persons. He can give us honour ; we, in giving him glory, do but return what we had received from him. It is our part to say with the holy David, "Of thine own have I offered unto thee."

I am hoping you are in health and good spirits, and dear Mary also : may mercy be shed upon her, and mother and daughter be bound in the bundle of life with the Lord our God, (1 Sam. xxv. 29,) in the day foretold, when he will perfect the character and number of his loved and ransomed people. This we are called to ask for, to hope for, and to wait for ; and, it may be, to contend for. In our pressing on towards home, and the visions of God, we may reasonably expect to meet opposition from the world, the flesh, and the devil. But "more are they that are for us, than they that are against us." We may set the Maker of the world against the things of the world, and set Christ, who took flesh, against the flesh, or sinfulness of the flesh, and set the Holy Spirit against the devil, and then what have we to fear in the conclusion of our day of contest ? Make him whom heaven trusted *your* trust, and all must end well. "Because I live," said he, "ye shall live also." Even so, Lord Jesus, even so. Amen.....

My dear daughter, I must now once more commend you to God, in whom you are brought to trust : may his holy influence abide upon you, and make you tender, forgiving, patient, and kind towards all the confessors of our Lord, and happy in your own soul. Dread nothing but sin.

Your affectionate Father,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 56.

TO THE SAME.

July 22, 1842.

My dear Daughter,

The God of all grace be your friend and your portion for ever : we are all as usual.....

I wish to see the hand of my God in all events, and to place myself under his wise and unerring direction in all my remaining journey to the banks of the Jordan. Time

is rapidly bearing me thither, offering me many admonishing hints as I go. It seems strange that what I know and believe on those impressive subjects has so little effect on my undying soul. But facts, however important in themselves, work not on our hearts, without the Holy Spirit put forth his sanctifying power with them. We readily admit most interesting principles, and yet we act not according to their latent tendencies, but as the Eternal Spirit applies them to our minds. Until then, we see things as though we perceived them not, and possess them as though we had them not. Well may we cry, "Quicken thou us according to thy word."

It is the high prerogative of the Holy Spirit to renew the affections, to strengthen languid graces, to exhibit the excellencies of Christ to our souls, through the doctrine of truth inwardly discerned and firmly believed, to set up an image of Christ in our minds, to shed abroad in our hearts the electing, redeeming, and powerful love of our God, to witness our adoption, to help our infirmities in the solemn engagement of fervent and constant prayer. We need his saving aid in all our duties and enjoyments, that our acts may be truly spiritual and vigorous, and that our selfishness may be crucified, that our God may be glorified. This divine agent is promised to all praying souls: our heavenly Father giveth his Holy Spirit to them that ask him. When he comes in his grace and power on our souls, our hearts dilate, our thoughts are spiritualized, our desires are fervent, our zeal is kindled, our humility is increased, and our unworthiness is discovered and felt, while gratitude and praise are offered to the God of all our mercies, through Jesus Christ our Lord.....

From your affectionate Father,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 57.

TO THE SAME.

Nov. 28, 1846.

My dear Daughter,

.... He that will be his disciple must deny himself, take up his cross and follow his Master. We have a good

land promised to us, and good friends there waiting for us, to receive us into everlasting habitations. But we must fight, and the contest is for life. Soldiers of the cross must not think of putting off their armour till they have served their time. And we are not out of the battle-field until we have got on the other side of Jordan. We are liable to the enemy's fire until we have put off our war-dress of mortal flesh.

What then? the Lord God is our sun and shield; and having given us grace he will surely give us glory. Were we in heaven we should not be safe *without* him, and on earth who can harm us if he be with us? He who is gone before to make ready for us, will not forget where he has left us, nor what are our wants and woes in following after him. And if he be for us, we may count of victory at last. His words are still the same as when they were first uttered, "Be of good cheer; it is I, be not afraid." This seems to signify that his disciples are apt to be fearful, and that when it is he that is ordering things that alarm them. His words intimate that he marks what disposition we are indulging, and that he loves his friends to be cheerful. It may hence be inferred also, that it is best for them to be of good courage, whose hope is in the Lord their God. And we find that he has recorded the faith of Abraham, and said that he glorified God by being strong in it: what is this written for? Is it not to excite all his friends to imitate the renowned friend of God? I trust, dear daughter, that you are "rejoicing in hope, patient in trouble, and instant in prayer." I must close my few remarks . . . but will not end without again saying,

I remain, your affectionate Father,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 58.

TO AN AGED FRIEND.

June 18, 1824.

My dear Brother in grace,

All grace and peace attend you and yours. I trust the fulness that filleth all is your daily supply, and that your

advanced years are fraught with holy joy and peace. Now is your highest salvation nearer than when you first believed, and than when we last bowed our knees together.

The fleeting things of time and sense have almost done exhibiting their varied scenes before your senses. Not much longer can you hope or expect to be detained in those porches of the divine abode. Soon shall you make your insured entrance into the inner apartments of your august Father and your triumphing Saviour. Soon shall the membership held in the church militant be exchanged for admission into the church triumphant! The day is hastening! The sympathetic tear will trickle down many cheeks whenever that event arrives, but thy grief will have finally subsided; for while thy weeping vessels will rest untouched with anguish in the silent tomb, thy ransomed soul will, free from dissonance and strife, be realizing pleasures older than creation in their source, and lasting as the love-thoughts of the Eternal Godhead in their streams. Long has the marvellous light of heaven been gleaming on your awakened mind. The twilight of the morning has long since opened upon you, and is hastening to form your evening, the last you will know for ever, for glory has no night. Heaven's glad inhabitants make their entrance, but not their exit; that world may be said to have its commencement, but conclusion it has none. Once a member of that celestial society, my friend, you will never be dismissed, nor grow feeble in your services, nor be ashamed and pained in performing them. No Monday morning's biting cares shall waste the Sabbath's joys. No drowsy frame shall rob the assembly of their intended attention. Flesh and blood can never enter there; no, not when Jesus comes to wake his slumbering brethren from their dusty beds. This mortal must put on immortality, and that which was natural when laid down in darkness, must be raised spiritual, and clothed with celestial brightness. Your present mantle and your homely walking-stick will never more be called for. Your sight and every sense will be so improved and sanctified, that holiness will be seated in them all, and happiness flow by every one. Not a misconception then will gain a place in your indulged mind; no thrilling pain shall ever start in any part, nor sickness once be known. While thus *your* soul and body will be saved, you will not meet a *fellow-citizen* less blessed than yourself. Who can conceive the joys that rise in such

a state where all that is excellent is present, and all that is imperfect is excluded! How humbling, how consoling, how binding is the influence and tendency of such Bible-truth on the spiritual and believing mind! I rejoice to attest you will be insolvent for ever, and am not ashamed to exhort you never to think of paying off the debt you owe. God has made you a debtor without injustice to you or himself; therefore, my brother, it will be your honour to confess the obligation you are under, living and dying. It is no disgrace to be a pensioner on the divine bounty, but a greater honour than to be a peer, most wealthy in this world. Are you feeble? understand the voice of God in it. He is gently premonishing you of your release from this decaying state. Let all your infirmities warn you to trust in God alone; they are your mercies, and are working for you, while they scarcely allow you to walk about the streets. There is nothing but what your heavenly Father employs in love to profit you one way or another. He has given you proof of his care for many years, and his truth endureth to all generations.

He is saying, "*Oh! Israel thou shalt never be forgotten of me.*" "*I am with thee,*" is still the encouraging and emboldening address he uses. To guide, to guard, to uphold, to delight, to sanctify, and to save, he is ever present in the path of the justified. In these few remarks, my friend, I know I am not your instructor, but sometimes a remembrance is not unuseful.

Ever yours in Jesus,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 59.

TO MR. HOLLAND.

Sept. 6, 1819.

Friend Holland,

The scripture requires me to do as I *would* be done by. Now, though I write a few lines to you I have little reason to expect that I shall hear from you. What benefit can your pen be to me more than your pipe? How great the change of your conduct will be should you ever make as much use of your pen as you do of your pipe! then I

may reckon of a letter frequently. Do you not suppose, my friend, that the mind of a man is more likely to be benefited by the use of a pen, than by blowing smoke about through a clay tube? But I have only a little time, so that I may as well not undertake to plough upon a rock! Old customs are hard to conquer; you will however agree with me, that *old things are passed away*.

The headship of Adam our primitive father is passed away, ever since he ate the stolen fruit, and Christ is the Head of the *new creation*, as he was of *the old*. We have lost one head, and have not only met with another, but a better one. We cannot commend the conduct by which the loss took place, but we may rejoice that the loss has proved our gain. I do not see what we could do with two heads at the same time, or how we could enjoy them; especially when they are so very differently furnished and sustained. But all things are become new, and all things now are of God, who reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ our new Head. How greatly is the new creation-body honoured by its having so glorious a Head! The beauty, light, and direction of the body are seated in the Head, and to decapitate it would be certain death. The life, the fulness, the support, the union, and government of the new creation stand in Christ its Head. This is a new dispensation of grace and justice—this is God's way of peopling the new heavens and the new earth by the second Adam. The permanency of the new creation is provided for in the immutability of its celestial Head. He is the same for ever, therefore the people in him abide the same. Their life is hid with Christ in God, and because he lives we shall live also. Death has no more dominion over him, therefore not over us. He stands between us and all danger. He cannot fall, O gracious and pleasing truth! the Head secures the body. Adam lost his paradise for himself and his seed, but heavenly things are built upon a better headship, in a better person.

The old relation morally considered is passed away, and we stand in a new relation to God and one another This relation was not given by law, nor could be. It was established in Christ before Adam was made, though not disclosed till after he fell. The rectitude, happiness, and claims of the old relation are passed away by the fault of the creature, but the new relation is unforfeitable. What

thanks, what praise, are due on those grounds! Your muddled divinity in *the pastures*, by putting justice first in the new dispensation, instead of sovereignty, keeps up a yea and nay tale continually. To dispense favour through equity, save in the finished work of Christ, must render it impossible favour to sinners. Either salvation is certain, or impossible, because God is the Saviour. Election is as essential to salvation as the cause is to its effect. The choice of God rules, and that of creatures is determined by his in all good things. They who will finally be ordered to depart, are as certainly lost as others are certainly saved. The state of those who are left under the law, is for substance as that of the angels, who are reserved in chains of darkness unto the judgment of the great day.

The use of this doctrine is to humble the pride of man, and to show the sovereignty of God, and his justice too; to stop the mouth of boasting. They who are saved might have been justly damned, therefore God was bound to save none; and hence it appears that the punishment of sin is just, and that God was at perfect liberty to choose whether he would punish it in the authors of it, or in a substitute. If we are redeemed, if we are forgiven, if we are accepted in Christ, if justice is our advocate, and the judge is our Saviour, my dear friend, how great is our mercy! How grateful should we be! How dutiful, how patient in all we suffer for Christ's sake! Let us do what we can to show our sense of the mercy; let us talk of his love, his justice and independence, his faithfulness and his power. Let us show a true regard for his word, his people, his worship, and be resolved to watch against our evil dispositions and all that he hates. God be with you, my kind friend; pray for me, and express my love to all friends.

I remain, sincerely as before, yours, &c.,

J. STEVENS.

LETTER 60.

To Miss S.

June 14, 1822.

My dear Friend,

I think you had reason to expect a few lines from me, from what I said to Miss P., and as my little time is so

called upon that I shall not have opportunity to visit you before you go into the country, I take the present moment to write the following reflections on a few serious points:—

Health is precarious. How little do we know what infirmities are awaiting us, by the path we are travelling, to seize our perishable frames of dust! We are liable to be attacked when we least expect it. We however can admit this, and still go forth with some cheerfulness. Disease is subject to the controlling hand of the God we adore—he knows where our danger lies, and he can prevent it, or promote our advantage by permitting it to fasten on us. Infirmities are premonishers; they read lectures to us on the mortality of man, and frequently remind us that we dwell in cottages of frailty, ever tending to decay. Thus are we prompted to enquire after a future dwelling-place, and to set our affections on things that are above. The things that in measure embitter our days, are made to facilitate our escape from a thousand snares, and to wean us from an inordinate cleaving to the things of this fleeting life. Therefore our advantages are found where our patience is tried, and our strength is increased where our weakness is manifested. God orders all our lot in immense love, not only in things that gratify our wishes, but in others that mortify our feelings.

Time is short. This is a fact, however unwelcome it may be to human feeling. The hopeful christian, however, is helped to reckon that this must be for his advantage. The less time here, the sooner he reaches the land of perfect satisfaction. He knows that time is only valuable to him as he is but to enjoy it as his in Christ, and as sanctified to his good through Christ. Christ is the Head of all things, and therefore our times are in his hands, and our days are numbered to us in his book of lives. Nothing evil is found in him; every gift is of everlasting worth, and our time state is highly valuable as it leads to, and terminates in, the endless felicities of the eternal world.

Death is certain. But death in Jesus is the believer's gain. Nature will ever shrink from it—it must be so: but the soul, filled with the joyful hope of immortality, solemnly resigns the tenement of earth to the silent grave, and looks for a mansion in the heavens according to the word of the Lord. The righteous hath hope in his death, and departs to be with Christ, and with those who are for ever saved by him from every hurtful snare, cursed sin, and

gloomy fear. Death is therefore made the gate of life to the believer in Jesus. It is his outlet from the vale of cares and tears—his door of hope in the valley of Achor, or trouble. It cannot work against him as to his body, but it must work for him also. When he seems most humbled by this enemy, and even falls in the conflict, he is then more than a conqueror. He then has an abundant entrance into the realms of endless bliss. He slips off his garment of flesh, which he leaves in his enemy's hand, and mounts upward to a throne of triumph and a kingdom of life and glory.

Grace reigns. This is our privilege, this is our security, this is our confidence, this is our joy. Grace must reign, it is its very nature to reign. It would not be grace if it did not reign, for it is incompatible with legal works. It will *produce* works, but cannot be procured by them. It reigns in righteousness, and overthrows the dominion of sin and Satan. All its acts are consistent with divine equity, and are expressive of divine wisdom. It reigns in every branch of our salvation. Its sovereignty is seen in the eternal election of the inhabitants of heaven, and in the adoption of the same people to be sons and heirs of God, the God of all grace,—also in remission of sins, justification to life, and sanctification to the glory of God. In all true experience grace reigns, and all experienced people are glad it does. But for grace we had never had hope, Sarah.

The blood of Christ is precious. Much more so in itself than we are able to conceive of—very valuable in the sight of God—in the esteem of the church in glory—and in the apprehension of the spiritual world, who live by faith on the sacrifice of the Lord. Is it not precious to thy soul, my friend? Is it not your passport into the holiest daily? It covers from wrath, it purifies from vileness, it sustains hope, it excludes fear, it procures fellowship with God and his saints. O prize it, praise it, trust in it, do not abuse it by indulging iniquity. Pray over the sacrifice and offer up all your wishes under this precious covering, this supernatural passover. May peace be with you, and safety be granted you in travelling out and in. Wherever you be, daily remember you are travelling to the bar of God, the Judge of all. Look to Jesus for all in all, and in him behold your Judge, your Saviour, and your divine Friend.

Believe me, your affectionate Pastor,

And willing Servant in the Gospel,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 61.

TO THE SAME.

July 5, 1824.

My dear Friend,

.... There is a time, Solomon says, for all things; I suppose he means for all the things which God hath purposed to be done. Time is subordinate to eternity, and shall remain till every purpose is accomplished. God will, in the dispensation of the fulness of times, gather together in one, all things in Christ. He is the representing and uniting Head of the whole family elect. He is the fulness that filleth all in all; of his fulness we have received, and shall continue to receive through the ages of ages, that will be ever abiding: evermore glory to come.

I have had, since I saw you, times of freedom, and times of depression: my feelings and enjoyments vary as oft as the weather, and different degrees of joy and strength are allotted. I had a dullish day yesterday, yet some ideas seemed to burn their way, and yield both light and heat. We took up the 6th chapter of Isaiah, 5th, 6th, and 7th verses. The leading ideas were:—first, the convicted penitent's confession of his sinfulness in the divine presence: he said, "I am a man of unclean lips, I dwell among a people of unclean lips. Woe is me! I am undone; for mine eyes have seen the King, the Lord of Hosts." Confession of sin supposes *accountableness to God, crime, and conviction*; for without these no honest confession can be made. Where these are, a sense of being lost is found, and at first the sinner thinks himself *undone*. These are felt when the holy God draws near to a guilty mortal, and lets his glory into the soul. Terror is created till Jesus is received, as the sin-bearing Surety. Secondly, The manifestation of the confessor's pardon, from the divine throne. "Then flew one of the seraphims," &c. This vision of the Lord on the throne, his angels attending him, and proclaiming his holiness, affected the prophet with a sense of his own sinfulness. The pardon of sin is represented by the figurative language. It was manifested from the divine throne through the altar. The whole seems suited to set forth the manifestation of pardon, through the gospel ministry. Ministers are to preach pardon through the sacrifice of the altar. The "live coal" sets forth the atonement

in our Lord's suffering humanity, and God appears therein as a consuming fire: the tongs, 1 Kings vii. 49, denote the doctrine, or word of truth, by which the sacrificed Lamb is brought near to us and applied to our hearts, and therefrom to our lips. The sinner is purified by fire, as the fire, in devouring the sacrifice offered, destroyed the sin imputed to it. Jesus in putting away sin from himself by his sufferings, also put it away from us whom he represented. Hence we come to enjoy the satisfaction of justice through the sacrifice, and to find that the fire of God is not consuming fire while it only touches us in the offering of Christ. What liberty, what boldness, what peace, what joy and gratitude do we derive from this mysterious way of pardon. Faith in the offering brings us salvation, endears Christ, kindles a hatred to sin, removes guilt from the conscience, and raises a lively hope of eternal salvation.

Who could have thought of such a plan! we can never enough praise the grace, the mercy, the merit, and the power therein displayed.

I wish you the rich experience of the prophet, through the live coal from the altar of burnt-offering, and of incense, while I remain,

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 62.

TO THE SAME.

1824.

My dear Friend,

I find it difficult to answer letters so early as I could wish; my time is always short, but I hope you will make every allowance you can for my circumstances; expect little enough.

You have hinted at such extensive matters that it would require some consideration to adjust them fairly and usefully.

The doctrine of rewards and punishments, has been detained under much confusion, by many authors and preachers. Nor must we admit any thing to be truth, but what is self-consistent. I have never seen the Arminian state-

ments of the Bishop of —, nor Dr. H.'s remarks upon them; nor should I expect him to offer much close reasoning upon the subject.

That our bad conduct should not have a tendency to excite servile fear of punishment, I do not conceive Dr. H.'s views require him to allow. Bad conduct either denotes a *partial* act, or a *fixed habit* of acting badly. In the latter case no man can shield himself in election, or prove that the curse of the law is not hanging over his head; the damnation of hell is his ultimate portion.

To say that such men have nothing to deter them from the commission of crime is untrue, nor is it fairly deducible from Dr. H.'s principles. The saint is under the reign of grace, which offers higher motives to holiness than the law of nature can afford. He is kept from vice by the love of virtue, or, if permitted to fall, is reclaimed by that gracious power that melts the heart to compunction, and raises a just indignancy at the betraying evil.

Whoever practises badly, will find the whole artillery of divine law marshalled against him, while he is a stranger to the gospel discharge. He that believes in Jesus, walks by faith, departs from iniquity, and is kept by the power of God through faith unto eternal salvation. The elect will be acquitted in judgment, but not merely because they are elect. The non-elect will be condemned, but *not at all because they are not elected*. Condemnation passes upon men as having sinned against the just authority of law; and *not* because they are not written in the Lamb's book of life. The cause of damnation, and the cause of salvation, must never be confounded. No man can be saved but by the redemption of Christ, still no man perishes because Christ did not redeem him. The angels in glory are not redeemed, neither do they perish. The Judge of all the earth is without iniquity, just and right is He. This is truth, this never can be refuted. Therefore when men are condemned, they, we may be sure, are justly condemned, for infinite rectitude cannot act unjustly. The wages of sin is death. This is God's decision. What is that which opposes it? Can greater wisdom be adduced? I deny it. Is the criminal at the bar more to be relied on for a just sentence than the omniscient Judge who cannot lie? Surely reason must have lost her rectitude before she can answer in the affirmative. Millions suffer before the eyes of their fellow-men;

can it be supposed that they suffer without fault? Then where is the equity of the supreme Lord of the creation? It were easy for him to prevent the miseries of life, if he pleased. I am sure he would do so, if justice required it; for justice and judgment are not the *visitants*, but the inhabitants of his throne.

The elect will be judged in him, in whom they were graciously and eternally chosen, but the rest will be tried in their own persons. They cannot be condemned, not because they are elected merely, but because they are made righteous by an act of sovereign grace. To make *justifiable*, is an act of sovereign favour; but to justify them that are so made righteous is an act of justice, both to the justified and to the Mediator on whose account they are acquitted.

Adam's first offence was as really the offence of all his seed then unborn, as the righteousness of Christ is the righteousness of all his seed, many of whom are as yet unborn. They who object to one of these, usually renounce both. No creature can be saved because he has not been guilty, because we are *all* guilty, Rom. v; and salvation supposes its subject to have been so. Whether the creature be considered as an infant or otherwise, does not affect the question. Salvation in every case is by favour, without any motive in the saved.

That men disbelieve the record of God, is no argument against its truth, nor excuse for their conduct. The deistical mind you refer to, will never approve of God's revelation heartily, until God imparts a new principle. This is owing to none, hinderable by none, but given to many. But it is an awful truth that the salvation of many is as *impossible* as is the damnation of others. Yet God will be glorified in his enemies, as truly as in his friends, though in a different respect.

Your affectionate Pastor,
JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 63.

TO THE SAME.

Feb. 21, 1825.

My dear Friend,

I am always in debt, and always the better for it; and

therefore it becomes me to be thankful for my humbling circumstances, and to express my sense of gratitude to those from whom my advantages proceed. For your favour, with that of your kind sister, I present my thanks; may that good hand that upholds the family of all the living, abundantly enrich you, and recompense every favour shewn to his tried servant an hundred-fold. How pleasing to see his finger secretly touching the springs of motion and effectually exciting his servants to communicate of his good things to them entrusted, to the different branches of his family. He feeds the ravens, he clothes the lily, and shall he not give food to his family, and clothe his household? No tender father can with him compare; his kindnesses are so numerous, so suitable, so seasonable, so satisfying, so prudently bestowed, that his character shines admirably through his conduct, and we are not only induced to mark his favour, but are doubtly impressed at times by the manner in which he grants it. Let his name be exalted: proclaim his faithfulness abroad, though equal praises cannot be rendered by the highest saints in glory.

I believe you feel your interest in the first Adam, and have an unwavering faith on the subject of imperfection: how far you may have sentimentally entered into it, I do not presume to know. But I do not expect that you are of them who would quarrel with the constitution of the relation between Adam and his seed. The inheritance he left his family is certainly sorely encumbered, and his *offence* has introduced consequences of which he could have little conception, though heavenly wisdom had evidently anticipated all, as appears by the relief extended through the second Adam. How conspicuously do the wisdom and sovereignty, as well as the justice of God, appear in the whole stupendous plan! To ordain all things for his own glory, was an end worthy of the great Author of heaven and earth. The folly of earth is controlled to illustrate the wisdom of heaven.

But who would have seen without the help of the Apostolic writings, the connection determined between the two Adams? God's designs can only be discovered by his own Spirit, so far are they above the expectations of man with all his powers of reason, and natural acquirement. Divine mysteries require a divine revelation, and are only enjoyed by those who are the subject of divine grace, by the inter-

nal work of the divine Comforter. We can as soon behold the sun by candle-light as discern the glory of heavenly things by mere nature, and love them heartily. But it is given to you, my friend, in measure to see their nature, use, tendency, duration, and worth. This is grace, Sarah! This is true honour! for this be thankful—women are not all wise!

It was you know, Sarah, by woman that man was led astray; this, however, may be deemed no honour to his understanding or his stability. It must, however, be owned that by the woman's seed the ineffably glorious work of redemption was accomplished. Thus was woman honoured by her Maker, and the enemy conquered through the same medium, as that by which he had triumphed. The manner of mercy is utterly different from any thing that created wisdom could have imagined.

Hence we may learn to look for great things by frail and improbable means; and to believe that nothing is too hard for the Lord. Our enemy is frequently beat on his own ground. The glory of God is secured, and the salvation of his people made sure; and even Satan is made to contribute to the accomplishment of it, contrary to his design. Sin is hateful, yet God can make it subservient to his own public praise, and he ever makes it work against itself in the experience of his people.

But I have not time to say more than that Christ is yet a Saviour, the Holy Spirit is still a Witness and a Comforter, our Father is in heaven, and there is our home, and there are our people.

The peace of God be with you, &c.

While I remain your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 64.

TO THE SAME.

On the death of a Parent.

Jan. 17, 1826.

My dear Friend,

The God all-merciful has brought you through a trying scene; you now stand in the world as you never did

before. You have no natural parent. But the same God who ordained your parents, has removed them both. Has he erred? Has he not done right? Has he not bereaved you mercifully? Have you reason to complain or to repine? You will, I am sure, wish to answer these questions righteously. He is wise, he could not err. He is just, he could not but do right. He is ever compassionate, not *sometimes*; he is merciful in *all* his ways, not in *some* of them; therefore he is good when he strips us by a bereaving providence, as truly as when he grants us any favour whatever.

You profess to walk by faith; this is the only way to walk with God. It is making his will our directory, and his arm our support. Hereby our way is shortened, and our journey cheered by blissful anticipations. Proud, vile, selfish nature will throw in its influence, and often produce a painful sigh, but faith brings in support from the source of all good. She keeps to her own heights, and speaks her own dialect distinctly. "It is the Lord," whose I am, and whom I serve. "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord, and shall we not receive evil?" "He will not always chide," nor ever without reason afflict his people. His blessings of grace are endeared through the trials of nature. His unchanging character is admired and valued under the continual vicissitudes assigned to mortals. While they one day love us, and another leave us, he abides the same. Many are left orphans in a youthful day, while others have kind parents spared till the greater part of life's journey is travelled. We know no reason for this but his pleasure; for his footsteps are little known. We know what he does is ever best; but why he does one thing and not another, we cannot even guess. If we can but learn wisdom by his doings, and draw fresh inducements to cleave to him, and set our affections on eternal things with growing contentment, we are then profiting by what passes around us. To hear his voice is not to be solitary, though few, or even none of the creatures should seem to know that we are among them. By the light of heaven let us aim to make our way through the mazes of this mortal life. A few, at most, are the days that remain for us; here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. We are not seeking what is not, for we know that we "have in heaven a better and an enduring substance."

The *importance* of this knowledge is far greater than we can be aware of. The vapour of bodily life is soon scattered, and we are gone; but bless the Lord, our imperfections go with it. And if we are not here, we shall be *with the Lord* who bought us, for ever to dwell where he is, and to be what he is. The Bible will not deceive us; it shall be unto us according to that sacred testimony; the word of the Lord shall stand for ever. The world will pass away, and all its vast contents will cease to be where and what they are, but truth will endure when the nations of this world are swept into endless oblivion.

To live is Christ, said the famous apostle, who had been an infamous sinner. He is our life too, my friend, and he will be so through ages of ages, wherein God will show the exceeding riches of his grace in his kindness towards us through Christ Jesus. Hold out faith and patience, a few stages more. Now is our salvation nearer than when we first fully believed.....

Believe me, your affectionate Pastor,

And true Friend in Jesus,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 65.

TO THE SAME.

April 27, 1826.

My dear Sister by heavenly adoption,

.....I hope you are mercifully upheld under your infirmities. A good hope, a cheerful mind, the blessing of ancient settlement, are delightful supports under the reelings of our poor cottages. The joys of God's salvation are real joys, and strengthen the mind greatly. You are on the whole highly favoured; may the favour be perpetual, and all the attendant fruits of immutable interest in Jesus be springing up in your bosom, and spreading forth in your life, to the gladdening of your soul, and the glorifying of the eternal God, as *your own God*.

Your parents did, I trust, name their daughter correctly, without ever intending it. SARAH, in Hebrew, signifies a PRINCESS; yea, even a *ruling lady, sweetly scented*. Now,

by sovereign favour you are born a princess, and are also richly perfumed with the holy ointment of the celestial tabernacle. This is being not only dignified, but being very acceptable to your Lord, and fitted to be his consort for ever. A promotion this, and leading to the happiest results. Betrothed to the celestial Father of the faithful, who can conceive of your immense riches? Nor will your Lord ever deny you through selfish temper, or sinful fear. He is not only supremely attached to you for the beauty he has put upon you, but he is able to preserve you always for himself. Sarah was born 1986 years before Christ appeared incarnate; it is therefore 3812 years since she entered this world, and she lived to a good old age, and then died. But the chief honour of Sarah was her *having faith in God*: Heb. xi. 11—13. Intercourse with the great and blessed God of heaven and earth sheds a lustre round the character of helpless man. This precious faith you profess to enjoy, and you have acknowledged your husband your Lord, and I hope are not afraid with any amazement, nor forgetful to do well: 1 Pet. iii. 6. Sarah, it seems, was a practical character, and her daughters are required *to do well*, and not to be afraid and terrified from their duties to God or man. To believe in God against all seeming difficulties, is to act the part of a true daughter of Abraham. May this be your conduct through the spirit of faith. The Lord bless you—grant you peace—be ever with you—keep you near himself in spirit and walk, and sanctify to you every trial; for he loves his saints in all he sends them.

I remain your affectionate Pastor, Brother, and Friend,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 66.

TO THE SAME.

July 9, 1828.

My dear Sister Sarah,

. I hope you and your respected sister will find the country air beneficial to your health; and that He who formed the wide sea and the dry land will deign to knit your hearts together in love, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the

mystery of God, and of the Father, and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge: Col. ii. 2, 3.

This treasury the apostle pointed to, that their hearts might be comforted. Union in love, riches of the full assurance of understanding, and acknowledgment of the mystery of God, he considered to be a ground of true comfort. He lets in comfort by letting in light, you see; and approves of an assurance of understanding; not, "*I humbly apprehend*," but *I am assured*, was his way of speaking. The treasures of wisdom, respecting our Saviour's person, relations, offices, and reign, are so hid in him, as to be seen through him. Hid to be revealed, *not* to be kept secret for ever; for the things of Christ are things for public benefit, for our consolation, on whom the ends of the world are come.

As in him dwells all the fulness of the Godhead bodily, so in him are all the chosen seed complete, being enriched with every excellence by their interest, and filled up with every good so completely, as for nothing to be wanting, nor any thing to be superfluous. In him there is nothing useless, nor one thing injurious. He is good without evil, excellence without defect; therefore well fitted to be the Head of the new creation, and the Lord of all its concerns.

Where we find the greatest eminence, we see the greatest condescension; and though we read of the wrath of the Lamb, we also read of his clemency and tenderness: Rev. xii. 20.

Never did justice more sternly display his impartiality, than on the dying day of our loving Redeemer; never did compassion spread itself so triumphantly as then. Where God had expressed his greatest wrath, he has unfolded his greatest love. Where he most awfully showed his hatred to sin, there he most strikingly showed his determination to pardon it. Here wisdom planned, grace reigned, mercy exulted, holiness shined, and divine power overcame. In that memorable day, our exalted Immanuel vanquished the powers of hell, and ransomed a chosen world. He satisfied the claims of justice, and entered the paradise of God, and all in a day! How surprising the obtainments of that afternoon, and how lasting the effects! Here is all our hope—here our foundation for time and eternity!

O that we could more dwell upon his charms, and appre-

ciate his worth. The hour is nigh when we shall be called to hang all our thought, hope, and affection hereon, while our present connections with flesh and sense are rending wholly, and without repair.

.....Wishing you a double portion of the unction of the Holy One, and begging an interest in your prayers.

I abide, in Jesus,
Your affectionate Pastor,
JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 67.

TO THE SAME.

April 28, 1823.

My dear Sister in the Lord,

Grace, mercy, and peace be with you from the Lord Jesus Christ—the fulness prepared to fill all in all, through the unction of the Spirit, our Witness and Sealer. We are honoured to live under a government where infinite wisdom directs, and immutable mercy presides, and every best thing is preferred and adopted to our advantage. If our allowance be diminished or altered, it is only because our best interest requires it should be so. Nor is there any blind conjecture in the appointments and assignments of our Lord. His means are excellent, his reasons are wise, his intention is merciful, and his ends are secured. He attends to our case, and nothing is done but what his great loving-kindness approves. Can anything hurt us ultimately that flows from infinite wisdom and holy love? Impossible! He cannot but do right, and right can bring no wrong to us. “He is the Rock, his work is perfect; a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he.” Our faith is required to act upon the admission of his character, and to give him credit for exemplifying that character, in *all* his dealings with us.

In *all* his ways, I say, for he is not like finite and faulty man, who sometimes acts wisely and sometimes foolishly. His plans are *always* the results of infinite perfection, not only in redeeming his chosen, but in communing with them. He hideth not his glory from a saint but with the same ends that he had in view in electing him to salvation, through the

death of the cross. If, like the skilful physician, he denies us for a while the enjoyments we have been accustomed to receive, it is for our health's sake. So that he and we are still agreed in regard to the good sought to be realized, only we differ at times in the means by which we are for pursuing that good. *We* like the light to shine into our apartment, *He* draws the curtains, and says we cannot bear it with advantage just at this time. We wish to be exhilarated, he sees it most for our soul's health that we should be lowered for a time. It is thus we are mortified in being sanctified, and reduced to be increased.

I know not how to conceive of his hiding his face from us, at any time, without supposing that for him to have done otherwise would have been unwise, unkind, and disadvantageous to us. For as his love is endless, and his knowledge infinite, and his power the same, what could hinder him from performing his will? We must therefore believe that we enjoy as much as we are capable of enjoying consistently with his attributes and our circumstances, we being *what* and *where* we are. And if he be glorified, we should be satisfied; and if his glory be promoted in us, and by our sufferings, we cannot doubt but our best interest will also be advanced. Can we not suffer loss for his name, and be willing to have our happiness promoted by infinite wisdom and grace? I hope we can; patience is a noble grace, and by its being duly exercised, we shall reap the harvest of matured experience: Rom. v. 3—5.

The Lord has highly favoured you, nor have you any reason to complain of him, nor will you have any. I am sorely tried, often through confinement of spirit; but through endless mercy, I am never left to doubtfully question my title to the inheritance. My pocket-money is very short at times, but my inheritance is sure. I am apt to be pensive when I see not his presence, but I wish to avoid all sinful disquietude; he is my Father, and best knows how to treat me for my final profit.

I hope, ere long, to hear that your harp is taken from the willows, and tuned to the praise of immutable love and eternal redemption. Carry an handful of promises into the court of mercy, through the vail that was rent on the ransom-day, and apply by the Chief Advocate to the King Eternal, and you will not lose your time. Your cause will be taken up in order, and settled satisfactorily. Wait pa-

tiently, and you will be treated mercifully, and admitted to the banqueting-house, under the love banner, and be constrained to sing, *He hath done all things well*, to a new tune, with acceptable melody.

Give my love to F——; accept the same yourself,

From your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 68.

TO THE SAME.

On the Presentation of a Bible.

Sept. 5, 1832.

My dear Friend,

I had not the most distant thought of asking you for a Bible, when I spoke about one to you. So prompt is your action in matters of benevolence, that I am too slow *to prevent it*; and so valuable is your present that I have no heart *to refuse it*; and nothing is left to me now, as a duty towards my benefactress, but to express my most grateful acknowledgments for the *unrefusable* and *invaluable* present, and to give her as much of it in return in my labour, as my ability to communicate and her ability to receive can admit. I must aim to extract from the whole, and return it to you by a little at a time, without injuring it as a whole. I must impart to you some pieces without pulling my book to pieces. You have taken such measure with me, however, as to defy me to give you more or better than you have given me. Accept my thanks, and receive my well meant efforts with much forbearance; the Holy Spirit be our aid and director.

I see our English Bibles differ, and so do our preachers, and yet they are alike—alike in matter, but dissimilar in form and manner. Some of them *appear* very small, some of them are larger, and yet the inward size is the same. Some hold forth their subject more easily to be seen than others, and so do preachers. What a famous bold face and clear page has the book you have sent! Truth cannot be set forth too clearly, especially for those who have weak eyes; and the strong-sighted seldom complain of things

being too plain. May the Author of the subject, thus clearly set forth as to type, give us to discern truth distinctly, and to exemplify it in our life in as bold and legible a copy as is the book you have so kindly bestowed on me. Thus shall we be discerned even by those whose eyes are not so penetrating as some others are. The blind, however, cannot read any copy, however plain it may be, (1 Cor. ii. 14, 15,) and some will mistake and say Hannah is drunk, even when she is devoutly employed, and so praying as to gain her petition at the Lord's hand. But, goodness be praised, he is our Judge who fully knows us and truly loves us.....

Your obliged Friend and affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

Love to F——. Pray for a poor thing called a minister.

LETTER 69.

TO THE SAME.

On the Death of a Beloved Sister.

Aug. 5, 1833.

My dear Sister in the Lord,

I can but sympathize with you,—my Lord and Master can *help* you. You have been called to resign what many a one never had—a *good sister*. What you both counted of and often prayed for is accomplished for her; and as infinite wisdom never errs in timing things, so the change to dear Fanny has taken place *when, where, and as* it seemed best to the best judgment. She is contented with it, and we have the highest reasons to be so too. I have no knowledge, but it certainly appears to me best that you should be the survivor. It is but as a moment and you will be sent for also, and then you will not be called to part more. We profess to live to God, and for his pleasure, and not to ourselves, and therefore, if we be sincere, we must approve of his measures in glorifying both himself and his people. His time is wisely fixed, and though his reasons are in many respects concealed by reason of prudence, yet his methods are ever the most worthy of preference. And if

we imagine a different course of acting, we dare not say that we should eventually prefer it. He doeth as it hath pleased him, and he is ever wise and just.

In heaven, and earth, and air, and seas,
He executes his firm decrees;
And by his saints it stands confess'd,
That what he does is ever best.

Had I known that Fanny was to hear me the last time on Thursday night, my discourse could scarcely have been more adapted to the event. Short, indeed, was the time of continuance here for her, and therefore short her sorrows. What is life but a vapour that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away? It is a short way to a long home.

I was often astonished at her zeal and perseverance in coming so far with her infirmities upon her, and the interestedness of her mind was uncommon and very pleasing to witness. But it was all subservient to the Lord's design concerning her, and she found her pleasure in the pains she took. She was zealous of good works on the ground of a glorious redemption.

I trust the Lord will support you to bear the stroke in the faith of Jesus,—to do him honour, and resign to his hand with adoring gratitude the purchase of his blood. The ties of nature are subservient to the bonds of grace; the former have answered their ends, and the latter have received the object of their influence into endless care and blessedness.....

God Almighty bless you, and uphold you in the serious path you are called to tread.

Believe me your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 70.

To Miss F. S.

March 9, 1827.

My dear Friend,

The ways of unerring providence are often very mysterious, though always very wise. We are called to believe

where we cannot comprehend, and to rest in the character of God when our feelings are sharply tried. He is always at our right hand to direct our way, to restrain our enemies, to remove our fears, and to moderate our griefs. The sorrow he will not prevent is nevertheless overruled for our benefit, and we are assisted to carry the cross after our innocent Lord, until he orders it to be removed from our shoulders.

It has pleased him to assign you certain infirmities that he could have prevented; but it will be your advantage to watch that they may be sanctified, since it is evident they must be endured. If blessed for your good, you will have no reason to regret the frailties of that body which are made the occasion of promoting the edification of your mind, though in other respects they seem to be an hindrance. Much belongs to the temper with which we bear our lot, as to our own comfort and the glory of God. With divine favour enriched, the griefs of time are borne with submission, and even with gratitude that they are so few and small, so bearable and transitory. I hope your hurt will be quickly overcome, and that you will be induced to move with the greatest caution, which will be your duty for your own sake, both as to your natural comforts and spiritual privileges.

I doubt not but your mind will be much assisted by the means of grace, should you be able to attend them. All things are possible to the Lord, that are just and good. He can strengthen you in body and mind; on him cast all your care. He has helped hitherto; his arm is almighty, and his wisdom is equal to his power. His past and present mercies have a long train more coming after them. The blessings of grace are undividable, having one is having *all* in right and in prospect. He gives no grace, or he gives all grace; and if he give grace, he also gives glory.

Endeavour to learn clearly your standing in Christ as the elect Head of his elect people. Every believer stands in him, so as to be holy and righteous as he is righteous. True religion consists in knowing and loving, trusting and adoring God in Christ, and by him. In him the perfections of God are exalted, and through him they shine forth in the complete salvation of the chosen, the redeemed, and the sanctified world. Wisdom combines the salvation,—grace renders it free to the unworthy,—mercy lets it down

from heaven to the miserable,—justice is vindicated in the scheme, and being satisfied in it, becomes the sinner's advocate, defends his covenant and blood-bought right to all the blessings of eternal love—to all the fulness of the great Immanuel. Power executes the stupendous plan of eternal wisdom, grace, and mercy, through the abounding merits of the church's Head and Redeemer. Faithfulness backs all the promises, and gives ample security to all believers for the final accomplishment of all Jehovah has said. The immutability of the Most High answers for our never being consumed, for he is not only gracious and merciful, but he is unalterably so; and he has made his people so in his dear Son, Christ Jesus. As he is, so are they in this world: 1 John iv. 17.

Now your interest is opening to you and in you, through the blessed Comforter, who, being come into your heart through the merits of Jesus' blood, convinces you of sin, of weakness, of want, of unworthiness, of the righteousness of Christ, of his right to reign over you as a ransomed sinner, and of the reality of eternal things, as well as their real worth. Thus impressed, you come to love God,—to love Jesus Christ, as a fit, a sufficient, and a necessary Saviour,—to love the saints,—to see the emptiness of this world's honours, amusements, and pleasures. Sin is hated, self renounced, the Bible credited and revered, and heaven anticipated.

May this be your experience daily, and a spirit of holy prayerfulness be imparted and renewed till the day of final elevation comes, is the friendly desire of

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 71.

TO MR. S. SMITH.

Aug. 20, 1826.

My dear Brother in the line of supreme adoption, through the First-begotten of God, whom the angels were ordered to worship in his entrance into our lower world,

Grace and mercy, peace and joy be with you from the

fulness that filleth all in all, through the mighty power of the Comforter.

In joy, in sorrow, in life, and in death, his love is still the same. It only needs shedding abroad, to elevate your trembling soul above all the trials of its crazy tenement, and all the gloomy prospects of life's termination. *Gloomy*, did I say? Let me not forget: my brother knows that the sting of death is removed, that the power of the grave is temporary, that death itself is his in Christ, 1 Cor. iii. 22; that death is rather a porter than a conqueror—a servant, than a Lord. And whatever is ours in and with Christ, will prove no *final* injury. He sanctifies to the good of saints all that awaits them: their weaknesses promote their strength, their wants increase their possessions; and by becoming nothing, they are promoted to be things honourable and happy, wholly and for ever. How contradictory these ideas appear in words, but you, my dear brother, understand them readily. You are a learned man: John vi. 45. "Ye have received an unction from the Holy One," said John, "and ye know all things."

I hope, my dear friend, that your bodily infirmities are diminishing, and that the country air is beneficial. This I cannot help wishing, though I cannot deny that *self* is involved. Friends are not very thickly sown, so that we may well wish to keep them as long as we can. This, however, like many other desires of ours, requires being regulated by humble submission to the will of God. Christian love seeks the highest welfare of its objects, therefore its ultimate object must be their glorification. Besides, when the Lord has need of them to fill any department of the upper world, it becomes us to go willingly to our assigned station, and to consent that others should go likewise. Now God always does as it becometh him; but alas! we poor, selfish mortals are so apt to be inconsistent. Our judgments and our wishes are so apt to fall out *by* the way, and *about* the way. We profess to walk by faith, and a noble walking it is, and the only one suited to our present state, yet too often we allow ourselves to be led by sense, by human feeling, human patterns, and imaginary prospects. The sun is only just behind the gloomy cloud; hidden, but not altered; equally glorious, but not equally felt and enjoyed. The events we so much wish to hinder, are sometimes ordered to bring us the highest advantages. God

sends many blessings by alarming messengers. A sweet kernel may be found in a bitter shell. Samson found honey in a lion's carcase; this was not *from* the lion, though *in* it. Jacob long lost his dear Joseph, but afterward saw how he gained by his loss, and was gladdened through his grief...

How far your present circumstances are really fraught with favours, may seem hard to prove. Yet we cannot, we dare not affirm they are not so fraught. They are expensive, they are inconvenient, they distress the body, they interrupt your attention to relative duties, they abridge your relative enjoyments, and they incapacitate you to fill your place in the congregation of the Lord; yea, they tend to damp the spirits, and shed a gloom over your providential path, and, it may be, sometimes yield occasion for the tempter to assail you. But then, but after all these things are owned, then, even then, you remember, they are not self-commissioned, they are from the hand of God; they are not useless, they are working for you *for the future*, more than they can work against you *for the present*: 2 Cor. iv. 16, 18; Rom. viii. 18.

God is calling off your attention from time objects, and drawing it to eternal prospects. O that your heart may be filled, through faith, with heavenly objects, as is the bodily eye by seeing; that all may appear near, and be felt as realities. Dressed, washed, anointed, sealed, enlightened; all from your Head of fulness, through the doctrine and influence of the Holy Comforter, you will live and not die. Wishing you all the treasures of God, I remain, my very dear friend,

Your affectionate Brother and Pastor

In the kingdom of Christ,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 72.

TO THE SAME.

June 29, 1827.

My dear Brother,

Grace, mercy, and peace, be with you, and reign over you daily, through the imperishable name of the ineffably

great Immanuel. I was glad to hear that you thought yourself rather better. May he that restoreth Israel, restore you, if it be best, if it be wisest, if it be most for his honour and glory, which is of far more consequence than the health of a human breathing-frame. Things are important as they tend to bring glory to God. Even our bodily, domestic, or commercial afflictions are of moment, as the glory of God stands connected with them. We may lawfully wish our own gratification and not obtain it, yet we have the highest reason for being satisfied, while we know that God is glorified. He made the world for the glory of his great name, he rules it for the same end. None can disappoint him of his *intended* ends, though they may daily break his just and reasonable commands. His purpose is never disannulled, though his precept is often denied. He makes the wrath and rebellion of man to praise him. Cursed iniquity robs him of his just rights, as an equitable Governor; but sovereignty controls the evil to his ultimate praise and glory.

What the enemy has meant for his entire dishonour, is by sovereign grace towards his chosen, and punitive justice towards the rest, overruled to his honour for ever. He may be opposed therefore, but never can be hindered. Neither can the interest of his people be cut off, nor their glory be taken away. For each event is working to the end his wisdom had designed, and his love had proposed from the beginning. You, my dear brother, are called to resign your family residence, and to trust your business to another: but not without your heavenly Father's knowledge. Oh no, he knows all things, he knows the corner shop in the road leading to Hampstead, and how many customers go into it in the day, what they purchase, and who takes the money. This God is your God, your Father, and your Friend. He calls you daily to trust your affairs in his hand, and to cast all your care upon him. He can preserve your rights, therefore request him to manage for you. He knows what you need, and has engaged to see your wants all supplied, according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus. He will either prevent the increase, and even the continuance of calamity, or he will help you to bear it. Your chief interest is daily going on, and you are riding on, upon the swift wings of time, towards the peaceful world of the ever blessed, in spite of all your in-

firmities. This is matter for admiration and gratitude, for this interest is the chief one, and it could not advance more rapidly, nor be more certain, were you the most healthy, and robust man in Britain. You have therefore got the jewel safe, though the casket may be in danger of being shivered in pieces.

God managed the world without us, my brother, before we came into it, and he will be quite able to do the same when we have retired from it. Let us endeavour to trust him with our affairs. He is all knowing, all powerful, just and good. Oh that we could act towards him accordingly! It is however hard to be quiet in the midst of confusion, and to be truly satisfied with events that seem to be stripping us of our apparently needful comforts. Still he exhorts us to trust in him, and promises he will never leave us, nor suffer us to be tempted beyond that which he will enable us to bear. He still cries: *Oh Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me*: Isa. xlv. 21.

.... I am now at 15, Upper Thornhaugh-street, where I shall be glad to see you if the good Lord of our mercies pleases. Any place is best if God think it so: even Bristol. But nevertheless we prefer home, humbly pray for it, patiently wait for it. I daily remember you, and beg interest in your prayers. I was last night at Wandsworth anniversary in the evening, I preached as well as I was enabled on these words: "Without shedding of blood is no remission:" Heb. ix. 22. I have been speaking at Salem a few times on 1 Cor. iii. 21, 23. Have had some elevated times, some more contracted ones. But it is my mercy if I see the Lord at any time. I hope you see him often, trust him always, revere him everywhere, and expect all he has promised. I am, my dear brother,

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 73.

TO MR. AND MRS. CLARKE.

Jan. 9, 1833.

My dear christian Friends,

The Most High Redeemer be ever dear to you, and as

the fulness of the earth is his, may he richly bless you with all temporal good, during your abode in this mortal life, recompense you largely for your kindness to me, his unworthy servant, and daily train your minds for the appointed meeting of the whole election of grace in the bright world above. God has done much for you, nor has he diminished his ability to bless you in your remaining days. As he can neither increase in his love, in his knowledge, nor his power, so neither can he decrease; for whatever he gives he has none the less to bestow, and whatever he does, he has no less ability to repeat the same.

It is now some length of time since you became petitioning converts at the seat of covenant mercy, and sought the remission of your sins in the renowned Immanuel's name. Having obtained help of God, you continue to this day, applying at the same court, and by the same advocate, for a continuance of the same blessings, and in hope that finally prayers shall end in praise, that *never* shall end; and all your crosses be changed for immortal crowns. Blessed and satisfying change, how suited to sustain the traveller in his way to his promotion and perfection. "Blessed," said honest James, "is the man that endureth temptation; for when he is tried, he *shall* receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him." What is this recorded for? What can it be recorded for, but to be believed, and that enduring followers of the Lamb may rest in the undeceiving testimony, and be kept expecting the promised exaltation and glory, that await the whole family of the faithful, when they have done and have suffered all their wise and merciful Father had pre-ordained for them. *Your salvation*, my friends, in Christ, is now many years nearer than when you believed, Rom. xiii. 11: you have much less ground to overstep than you had, many fewer vexations and sufferings to undergo, and the state of perfect knowledge, sinlessness, and joy, is meeting you as fast as the sorrows of this wilderness are receding. In the vessel of time you are constantly proceeding on your voyage, sleeping or waking, toiling or resting, weeping or rejoicing, losing or gaining, hoping or doubting, in bright or in cloudy days. Heaven is nearer, of which your present faith is the substance, ground, and evidence.

You now are saved from the *imputation* or *charge* of your sin; and from the *punishment* of it; also from the *dominion*

of it. These are great things, and never fail to be followed by the remaining branches of full salvation. But there is a salvation yet to be revealed and realized which you have not in possession, though you have it in right by the covenant of Christ and his merit thereby on your behalf. You are to expect therefore to be delivered from the *existence* of sin; from the *place* of it, as it is in this world, Gal. i. 4; and from the *effects* of it in your souls and bodies. This will not be fully gained until our Lord appears the second time, without sin unto salvation: Heb. ix. 28. He has undertaken to present his whole church to himself, a glorious church as well as a gracious one; not having spot or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it *should be* holy and without blemish. Now when it shall have neither spot of sin, nor wrinkle of infirmity, but all mark of the Eden lapse is fully done away, what a glorious church shall it be then! It shall be *like him*, according to the predestinating will of God: 1 John iii. 2; Rom. viii. 29. This shall be the glorious manifestation of the sons of God, and their glorious liberty: Rom. viii. 19, 21.

Let us then be looking for this blessed hope, and patiently carry our cross, till our great Captain appear to perfect the triumph of his followers, and cover their enemies with final shame. Lift up your heads, for this last redemption draweth nigh. Aim to keep sight of *the mark*, and press toward it in ardent prayer and vigorous hope. Our Lord holds for us the conqueror's crown, and shall we not hope to the end? We are encompassed about with a great cloud of witnesses, we have the footsteps of our divine Shepherd and a vast multitude of his flock, to induce us to hold on and hold out to the end.

Our Leader has his eye ever upon us: angels observe us: devils mark our proceedings: the world is gaping upon us: our fellow-heirs are looking how we move, how we suffer, how we evince our love to the truth, to its Author, its advocates, and its enemies. The Lord help us, the Lord be on our side, the Lord rule our opposers, and maintain our faith and hope to the end. Then shall we find our home with the blessed, and never complain about the way we have come, but joyfully extol the grace and redemption, power and faithfulness, of our holy Lord for ever. Believe me, dear friends, your obliged and affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 74.

TO MRS. S. CLARKE.

Dec. 12, 1845.

My christian Friend,

It is now but a short way we have to go to Jordan's bank, and therefore I trust we are drawing near to the promised land. "It is a good land," said Moses, "which the Lord our God doth give us:" Deut. i. 25. I would humbly and hopefully say the same to you. And if I suppose the Lord Jesus to adopt the words, they become the more sweet and encouraging. The spirit and import of his teaching implies the same sentiment, as if he should say to his followers, "It is a good land which the Lord our God doth give us." We know he has said, "In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so I would have told you: I go to prepare a place *for you*:" John xiv. 2.

This place is beyond our conception, only we may rest in his love, that it shall be suitable to our happiness as his sincere friends and followers. It is where he himself is, where God is more manifested than in any other place, where the holy angels dwell, where the spirits of *just* men made perfect are accommodated and devoutly employed. It is a kingdom of holiness in which the inhabitants are all righteous. We have some friends gone forward, who not long since prayed with us and for us; you remember one, whose memory is welcome to us both, at whose silent grave I attended, on the 23rd of August, 1844.* I need not mention his name, you can repeat that. On that solemn occasion the following remarks were made, as far as I can give them, at the grave's mouth: "We are now arrived where *mere opinion* is lighter than the descending flakes of snow. Whatever notions may present themselves to our minds now, respecting the death of the body, and its attendant consequences, we say here, 'Nevertheless what saith the scripture?' We inquire not now, what is your opinion; but what is your faith? Not what do you think; but what do you believe? The scripture saith, 'The wicked shall be turned into hell,' Psal. ix. 17; again, 'The wicked is *driven away* in his wickedness; but the righteous hath hope in his death:' Prov. xiv. 32. As the wicked and the righteous are contrary in their lives, so they are in their

* The funeral of her husband.

deaths, and in their endless state after death. These solemn things the scripture saith.

It also saith, "A good name is better than precious ointment, and the day of death than the day of one's birth:" Eccles. vii. 1; Prov. xxi. 1. By faith a good report is gained. This was proved in M. Clarke. He gained a good report, and he retained it to the last: Heb. xi. 1, 2. Such men shed honour on their sentiments, reprove the inconsistent by their conduct, and they encourage the serious. A man of good name, and such was our brother Clarke, is a man *of* God, and *for* God; noted for his *dependence* on him, and *enjoyment* of him. Ointment, referred to by Solomon, was very costly, John xii. 3; and might be called *precious* for its value, its fragrance, and its use, in that hot climate; but a good name is still far better,—it connects us with heaven and with God.

The day of death is better than the day of birth; but this is only true to those who have a good name in and through Christ—who die in the Lord Jesus, as their righteousness, and the author of their salvation. Such was the outline of subject at good Maullam's grave. He was, through sovereign grace, a humble christian, a kind friend, a patient sufferer, and esteemed most by those who knew him best. Well, religion is personal; aim to be as he was, as far as he followed Christ. Grace is free, solicit more at the throne of God, for he giveth more grace. Set Christ before you as your expiating Priest, and as your holy and sanctifying pattern. When you can, pray for your enfeebled and aged pastor, who once more subscribes himself,

Yours affectionately for Christ's sake,

J. STEVENS.

Mrs. S. desires her christian love. I am as usual. Christ is ever the same.

LETTER 75.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 29, 1846.

My aged and enfeebled Sister in the Lord,

I was sorry to hear of your having fallen to your bodily hurt. Various and numerous are the harms and

frailties to which we are exposed in this mortal life, but all are under the control of an infinitely wise and merciful God. Our times, our lives, our limbs, are in his hand, and he can preserve all our powers, if it please him so to do. What he will not hinder from befalling us, we may reckon he intends to help us to bear. With this view we are warned against despondency, and encouraged to put our trust in his goodness and power for help and protection. God has helped us hitherto, my friend. It is *too late* to doubt his aid now; *what!* have we breathed his air for seventy years, has he called us out of our natural darkness, has he led us, into his marvellous light as it shines in the gospel of Christ, has he given us special faith in his doctrine, has he also given us good hope through grace, has he repeatedly smiled on us through his word, has he taught us to pray in faith, has he embittered our sins again and again, has Christ been made precious to us, and has he constrained us to seek those things which are above, where Christ sitteth at the right hand of God? Then let us take courage, and say with Manoah's wife, "If the Lord were pleased to destroy us he would not have showed us all these things, nor would he, as at this time, have told us such things as these:" Judges xiii. 23.

Our hurts and our sufferings are all numbered and dated in God's book of decrees, the *how*, the *when*, and the *why*, are all in the purpose in his will, and all must be brought to pass as he has wisely ordered.

"And by his saints it stands confessed,
That what he does is ever best."

Our days must be short, though our pain may be sharp. May our patience never fail, our prayers never cease, until we enter the regions of praise.

The best is to come, my sister, the best knowledge, the best enjoyment, the best society, the best employment, the best country, Heb. xi. 16; the best substance or portion, Heb. x. 34; the best ability, the best sight of Christ, the best likeness of him, the best fellowship, the best happiness, the best body, Phil. iii. 21; Cor. xv. 42—44; the best worship, the best view of the glory of God, and his throne of celestial government. This best state is reserved for all them that love God, and prove it by doing his commands: James ii. 5; Rev. xxii. 14; 1 John iii. 23.

The time is now short; in the approaching end of another year, we are reminded of the end of our numbered days, which I am hoping shall bring us an end of all sighing and mourning for ever. Muse on the Apostle's words in 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10; and may the Holy Spirit assist your prayers, strengthen your faith, animate your hope, dispel your darkness, and multiply your joy in the Lord,—such is the desire of your enfeebled, but

Affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

Mrs. S. unites with me in every good wish on your behalf. A troublesome cough and a shortness of breath, &c., await me, but I live in hope.—Farewell.

LETTER 75.

TO MR. AND MRS. JACKSON.

Jan. 5, 1835.

My kind Friends,

I accept the token of your good will with gratitude, which you left at my house for my table. Lamb, slain lamb, is the chief thing that I am ordered to set forth for the nourishment of hungry souls all the year round. But though yours, on which I dined to day is very fine and good, you will excuse me if I say, mine is infinitely better, and as cheap too as yours can be. And besides, mine is in season all the year, and will not grow worse for keeping. There is another thing which is peculiar to mine, though a man eat all he can of it, yet he has none the less to live on in future. This is a very distinguishing property, and is what renders mine very valuable and of constant use. I have called it *mine*, in like manner as Paul said, *my gospel*; but I am pleased to think that it is yours also; for though I am employed to set it on the table, you are both invited to eat of it. I can therefore appeal to you whether you know of any lamb to be compared to it? It never cloy the appetite, for they who once tasted it never wish to see any thing substituted for it. The more frequently it is enjoyed, the greater desire is created to have it continued.

It not only keeps up the strength of the heart, but what

is striking to notice, it even *causes old men to grow*, as well as young people, and is remarkable for producing courage and removing fearfulness. Now, in these respects, you will I am sure acknowledge the superiority of the Jerusalem Lamb, beyond any that has ever been killed in England. But these things are not all that may be said, for a main thing yet to mention is, that it preserves life, and no one who has ever eaten of this Lamb has been left to suffer eternal death. And we may also add that the first death has never been known to destroy the desire for it, which thousands have felt; nay, even *after* death, in the next world, millions live upon it joyfully.

Then, my good brother and sister in the line of grace, while I feel sincerely thankful for the lamb you gave me, yet how much more reason have you to be thankful for this Lamb which I know has been sent to you, and that when you had no more expected it than I had that which you gave to me. O how sweet are the bestowments of friendship. The Lord ever give us thankful hearts under his numerous and lasting favours. I hope you continue to enjoy the blessing of God under the word in Salem. You come far and have need of encouragement. May the good Spirit of God accompany his word to your minds. When you can, pray for your helpless pastor, and he hopes to do the same for you. Peace be in and with you.

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 76.

TO THE SAME.

January 1, 1836.

My dear Friends,

Many thanks to you for your kind remembrance of me, not only in the good lamb sent, but the kind letter which attended it. It used to be said of good Romaine, that there was a great sameness in his ministry, and I suppose it was so—but then it was only necessary for it to be *always good*, and then the sameness would be an excellence. You seem to put me in mind of the idea, by what you *send* and what you *say*.

It is as if you would have lamb before you daily—we imagined that what you sent us must have been what is sometimes called *early* lamb. It was evident however, that its *earliness* did not diminish its goodness. You know that some around us like not the *earliness*; they say they like lamb, but if it be *early* they are afraid to eat it! To you this may seem a needless fear, and indeed an injurious one to their own loss. But some men seem to be obstinately determined not to taste what they have once been led to think ill of, nor are they very willing to let their neighbours enjoy what they prefer, but must fall to abusing them, and misrepresenting them. This however will neither change your taste nor mine. Could they but feed without hating us, I think we could live without annoying them, though they imagine they have so much advantage over us.

There is a proneness in old folks to talk of and dwell upon things of former times. This seems what might be expected; and then they who can go farthest back in their companionship seem to be the chief of the company, and it was a law in Israel that old men should be treated with marked reverence. "Thou shalt rise up before the hoary head and honour the face of the old man, and fear thy God, I am Jehovah," Lev. xix. 32. Why then should not not we do honour to the ancient man, whose appearances have been marked with hoariness in his appearing to Daniel and to John, Rev. i. 14; Dan. vii. 9.

What if we should feel a preference to his person on account of his antiquity as the Man, as well as because of his eternity and non-beginning as a person of the Godhead, why should we be crucified among thieves for this our choice? We have good reason for rising up before the face of this most ancient of men, and for honouring his face, presence, or person, for he is to us our Head of wisdom, and our venerable and enriching *Ancestor*, through whom all our best property descends to us from the triune Deity which can have no source nor beginning. Here we can only live by faith, for reason never rose so high except by being winged with faith and hope, and aided by the breezes of the Holy Spirit.

I am supposing by your sending *early* lamb to me, that you will not object to my sending something analogous to you. But, though I have plenty, I cannot just now get time to cut it up into joints conveniently, and must pray

you to accept this small weight for the present, with all the good will that words can be thought suited to convey.

Hoping you will always have something good to live on at Salem, and will allow for some failure in the steward and cook there engaged,—his intention is often better than his performance—may your appetites be strong, for therein is great advantage on the side of the entertainment served up. Whatever you meet with I hope you will

Yet believe me, your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

Though I be nothing He is all.

LETTER 77.

TO THE SAME.

March 28, 1837.

My dear Friends,

Many thanks for the good things you kindly sent; I should have written sooner but my time has been so engaged that I had not opportunity, and even to-day, I have not less than three appointments to attend to, each quite distant from the other. I returned late from Brentford last night, where I had been to preach at their anniversary—my text was, “The hope which is laid up for you in heaven,” Col. i. 5. I imagine you would have enjoyed the subject had you been in the assembly, especially if the Lord, the master of assemblies were there with you.

A hope in heaven is a most desirable interest for us who have so short a stay in this vale of mortal life, where all we call our own will soon be the possession of others and return to us no more for ever. On the other hand, as we have souls that cannot die, we have need of an interest that shall endure for ever. Our heavenly Father has foreseen this, and has laid up for us in heaven, where our heritage remains incorruptible and unfading, when the fashion of this world will have passed away. Of this heavenly rest we could have known nothing, had not the gospel of the kingdom lifted the veil, and given us a view of it by faith as a real, though distant felicity. What is hereafter to be enjoyed in heaven, is now our blessed hope, *laid up* there for us by

our heavenly Father, Titus ii. 13; Rom. viii. 24, 25; 1 Pet. i. 5. Prepared, reserved, and secured, though unseen. Herein we stand wholly by faith in his testimony, we know no more than he has told us. How great is his kindness in telling us so much, and in causing us to believe his word, and hope in the Lord for things invisible.

Herein is love and life eternal—herein we behold the standing of our Lord Jesus for us in his ancient glory, in expectation of his redeemed coming up to see the glory which he had with his Father before the world was: John xvii. 5, 24.

The hope laid up is called the hope of righteousness, Gal. v. 5; the hope of eternal life, Titus i. 2, and iii. 7. This hope is conceived of in measure by the *qualifications* required to the enjoyment of it, 2 Cor. v. 5; Col. i. 12; and by the company in which it is enjoyed. There are met the ancient patriarchs and prophets, apostles and saints, who once lived in this world, but have long since finished their course, and exchanged their crosses for heavenly crowns, Matt. viii. 11; Heb. xii. 23; 2 Tim. iv. 8. Many whom we have known have joined that unsinning multitude, and have forgotten to weep, but are occupied in the worship of that happy state.

All who have faith in Christ and love to all the saints, are bound for that fair haven, and are expected to join the blissful throng. With this hope laid up, my friends, support your minds, and reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that shall be revealed in us. God no more errs in events that *bereave* us than in those that *enrich* us. Speak for a treasure in heaven, for there you are expecting to be shortly. The *future* is the chief heritage. I hope you are well, hopeful, contented and grateful through the knowledge of Christ, and the prospect of a hope laid up for you in heaven wholly by grace.

Accept this token of good-will,

From your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 78.

TO THE SAME.

April 13, 1837.

My esteemed Friends,

You have again laid me under obligation to present my thanks for your nourishing communication. Good things do good, and claim our gratitude; and while we regard the main hand that supplies, we cannot but esteem the agents by whom he imparts his benefits.

I think better meat than what you sent for me, could scarcely be obtained, even in the far-famed city of London. You display a true generosity in exhibiting a *quarter* of a lamb at a time, but I am bound to set forth a *whole one*; nor indeed do I expect that you would be satisfied were I to dare to divide the Lamb, and only preach a part of one. For Christ is not divided: 1 Cor. i. 13.

Truth is a chain of inseparable links, and dividing it is destroying its use and weakening its effects. Heavenly blessings go in clusters, he who has received one has a right to all, for he is blessed with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things and places in Christ, who is the Lord of life and glory.

I have been my journey to Ipswich, to Grundisburgh, seven miles beyond, and to Colchester, eighteen miles on this side of Ipswich, and again am expecting to resume my station in Salem. How short is my time of labour now become! how soon must I go hence to return to my place and my little flock no more! But the end requires it to be so: the gospel which I preach and you have received, supposes it to be so; the glory of Christ demands it, nor can heaven be enjoyed without we become settled inhabitants of its blessed state and place.

This is not intended for more than a temporary residence, and a way to the future. Happy are they who so use this world, for they do not abuse it nor misplace it. Such men will have no regret to experience that they came into the world, and they should aim to resign it, and rejoice in the hope of the glory promised. But how hardly can some of its true heirs look up with a cheerful spirit to their own inheritance! Weighed down by bodily cares and propensities, and having but small experience of heavenly things, we are too apt to wish to tarry here, rather than to depart

and to be with Christ, which yet we own must be far better. So inconsistent are we, and so difficult do we find it to prefer the lasting future to the fleeting present things. How great is the forbearance of our Father in heaven. Let us aim to set our affections on things above, and send our petitions forward for a seat in that assembly where our Redeemer lives and reigns for ever.

I hope you are enjoying a usual portion of health and comfort at Homerton, and that our God will further bless us in his holy ways, and render us contented and grateful in our appointed lot. Time is short, creatures are dying, the world is changing, Satan is roaming about for mischief, saints are praying, the wicked are sinning, the Saviour is interceding, heaven is preparing, death is coming, eternity is just before us !

Believe me, your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 79.

TO MRS. JACKSON.

May 18, 1838.

My dear christian Friend,

I receive with gratitude your kind present of delicate food for the body, and should have been glad to hear therewith that my highly esteemed brother, John Jackson, were increased in health and strength, had it been the will of our ever merciful Father to grant us that favour. I perceive, without any surprise, that you are not a little concerned on this serious subject. We all like to keep our best friends ; this is quite right ; but we must allow the Lord our God to have his will also, as well as we have ours. Nor must we think him wrong, though he should prefer his will before ours.

This world is not a place for endless settlements ; contracts here are more like leaseholds than freeholds. We not only *meet* here, but we must *part* here. Connections in this life can only last as long as life, and life is ever dubious, and certainly short. You have long remained together to what many have, nor could you expect much

longer the brittle thread of union in the flesh could remain; but alas! we know, and yet we seem unwilling to know; yet the Lord keeps to his word, however we may forget our agreement. You remember perhaps, that on a day far back, you promised to take my esteemed brother for better or for worse, until death should part you asunder. How much more willingly you entered into this important covenant *then*, than you *now* can give your consent to what was then involved in it. Yet you then *knew it was a union exposed to dissolution* whenever death should call upon you. Nothing therefore unexpected nor uncommon is approaching. It is the established order by which the generations of mankind are brought upon the earth, and are removed from it, one after another, until the end comes.

The Lord help us to accept the cup of sorrow at his hand, as well as that of happiness. "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord," said Job to his wife, "and shall we not receive evil?" Our dear Redeemer said, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" John xviii. 11. So you know David said, "I was dumb because thou didst it." And Eli; "It is THE LORD, let HIM do what seemeth him good." Why are these things recorded, but for our instruction and imitation? God will help you, my sister, and that right early.

It may please the Lord to lengthen out the life of your loved companion; for this you may *submissively* pray; but it will be very safe for you to request grace to help you to act the christian part, whatever may prove to be the will of God, for he can only will what is best, and that you do not intend to deny.

Suffer me to say a word to my esteemed brother.

Your affectionate Pastor,

J. S.

LETTER 80.

To MR. JACKSON.

Brother Jackson,

God will be with you, even to the end, and beyond it.
Are the shadows of the evening stretching forth their

greater length? Then *rest is near, and a brighter morning is approaching*. He that offered up himself is waiting to receive all his followers to his heavenly mansions. He will send the family chariot for you in time, only see that your matters are all packed up ready. Keep your court dress by you, even that robe which both justifies and dignifies the wearer. Ask for plenty of oil for your lamp, Matt. xxv. 7, 10; and for a sufficiency of holy ointment of perfume, which may shed a reviving odour round about. Beg to have a heavenly guard until you are out of all danger from thieves and robbers. Be sure you speak to the King himself about *your chief treasure*, and I would have you *renew your deposit* of the same, where honest Paul entrusted his, when he said, I know whom I have believed, or trusted, and am persuaded that he is able to keep that which I have committed unto him against *that day*: 2 Tim. i. 12. O what a day that will be! what shouting, what triumph, what rejoicing, what thanksgiving and praise!

I have omitted one thing now; keep your sword lying by you, whether you be able for much fighting or not. You are a soldier, and must not give up your sword nor your shield, until you enter the city of peace.

Believe me your interested Friend,

And affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

Mrs. S. unites in christian regards. I am engaged to be at Horsal, beyond Chertsey, on Tuesday, but hope to return for Thursday.

LETTER 81.

TO THE SAME.

Sept. 21, 1838.

My highly esteemed Brother in our heavenly Father's love, and our elder Brother's care and keeping.

The Lord is about to perfect your happiness, and banish all your infirmities. The symptoms of his love in this matter are manifesting daily, through the increasing evidences of the decay of natural strength. The house is

getting worse, and the tenant getting better. Your lowland dress is becoming thread-bare, and a new suit is shortly to be received instead of it. Yes, my brother, you will soon be clothed upon with your house or covering which is *from* heaven, and *for* heaven. You may remember how splendid our brethren appeared on the mount with our Lord: I mean Moses and Elias. See Matt. xvii. and Luke ix. 28. Why, my friend, you can never shine so brightly here without changing your suit: you must be unclothed, that you may be clothed upon. *Much* time will hardly be employed in your undressing, though some trial of your patience may be made; but, my brother, remember it is the *last* sorrow; it is *necessary* to the highest happiness; it is *unrepeatable*; it is the way of *all* the just; it is the way our Saviour went.

It is remarkable that our Lord has led his servant Paul to include death in the given inventory of his people's *all things*: 1 Cor. iii. 22. But then it must be observed carefully, that it is only as death is ours *with* Christ. Death, says he, is *yours*, for *ye are Christ's*, and Christ is God's. This alters the case amazingly; this leaves us to benefit by the *stroke* of death, while we suffer not by its *sting*. Our kind Redeemer received the sting in himself, and only left the stroke for us to endure. Interest in our sin-bearer exempts us from every thing that would be inconsistent with our heavenly Father's love. Nothing must overtake us which would deny his electing, adopting, and redeeming love. But if death had not been included in the inventory of our mercies and benefits, his love would not have ruled *all things* to our advantage and security. Grace in Christ Jesus has reduced the haggard monarch's power, to that of a useful porter to the kingdom unseen. Now faith is the *substance* and *confidence* of things hoped for, and the *evidence* of things not seen: Heb. x. 11.

"It sets times past in present view,
Brings distant prospects home;
Of things a thousand years ago,
And thousand years to come."

Thus we know without seeing with our eyes; and live and die, resting on the testimony and faithfulness of God, "whom having *not seen* we love, in whom, though now we see him not, yet believing, we rejoice with joy unspeakable, and full of glory: receiving the end of our faith, even the salvation

of our souls:" 1 Pet. i. 8, 9. My brother, you know that faith is for dying days, as well as living and healthful days. "These all died *in faith*," said the apostle: Heb. xi. 13. They had not seen the things promised, but they rested in the promises, knowing that what he had promised he was able to perform. Besides, you have an *anchor* called *good hope*, for the stormy season, which is for the purpose of keeping you safe from hidden rocks and burying quicksands. Your pilot well knows the sea through which you have to sail, and never was known to lose any vessel *committed to his management*. They have been tossed wonderfully on the sea of life, but have all got safe to shore. "I am persuaded," said the well taught apostle, "that he is able to keep that which I have committed to him against that day:" 2 Tim. i. 12. This is, I hope, your language too, and Paul was as vile a sinner as John Jackson. I beg you will accept this small token of pastoral and brotherly love, from

JOHN STEVENS.

My love to Mrs. Jackson, with thanks for her fine fruit. God bless you both, and be your help and joy. I will endeavour to spend an hour or two with you, should we live, next week, if possible, and it be agreeable to you. Farewell.

LETTER 82.

TO MRS. JACKSON.

Nov. 28, 1838.

My bereaved Friend,

The Lord is on your side, and has a constant eye upon your present affecting circumstances. He has not denied himself in the solemn visitation that has come upon you. It is a fulfilment of his word, an answer to many prayers, and has swept away many infirmities from your departed companion. You met in friendship, you lived together in friendship, you have parted in friendship, and will meet again in friendship to part no more. You are now called to anticipate that final fellowship which is founded in a relationship spiritual and heavenly.

You have much to be thankful for now, though left a

widow, yet, not destitute, not embarrassed with family cares, nor to hear the cries of a household of fatherless children. Nor are you left to fear for the state of your deceased husband, through the many improprieties of his conduct: for he evinced the spirit and carriage of a genuine follower of the Lamb. His sorrows are ended; you cannot wish him back to suffer and sigh in this mortal scene. O no, rather seek daily the larger enjoyments of the first-fruits of the land above, that you may rejoice in hope of the glory of God. It pleased God to assign you a gracious and kind man to accompany you through the prime of your days, and you seem loudly called on to say, "The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away, blessed be the name of the Lord." Short is the time that we who are left can count of in this world. It may be shorter than we are ready to apprehend. The good Spirit of the Lord be merciful to us, and meeten us daily for our appointed change.

You have now a most intimate friend in the land of the blessed, where he had often longed to be, where you hoped he would be: aim to dismiss all that selfishness that would prevent your solemn joy on his behalf. His frame was worn out, his days were all spent, his duties were all performed, his sufferings all ended; therefore he had passed through what had been allotted for him, and was at once released, and called home from his labour on earth, to dwell for ever with his beloved Lord, and the family of saints in light. Let your spirit and language be like David's on the death of his infant, "But now he is dead, wherefore should I fast? Can I bring him back again? I shall go to him, but he shall not return to me:" 2 Sam. xii. 23.

I continue greatly affected with my cough and cold, and seem to dread the undertaking to attend at the grave. Should I remain as I have been for some length of time, I should fear such an exposure might be of great injury to me, which I am ready to believe my beloved brother would not desire me to expose myself to, could he be consulted. I am aware of your feeling on this point, and am sorry to intimate the matter; but really my lungs are so affected at times, that I cannot but hope that if possible you will excuse me. But let me hear from you.

I am yours in the Lord,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 83.

TO THE SAME.

November 9, 1840.

My esteemed Sister in the Lord Jesus,

I am glad to find that your mind is kept in some exercise on divine subjects, for it is best to be exercised, though it be with some pain, as it gives employment for *faith*, and *patience*, and *earnest prayer*. The troubles through which your life is drawn, will but further convince you that real character is not every where to be found, and that this world is not meant for our rest, but may render our true rest desirable. If we rightly fear our God, we have little reason to fear our fellow creatures; and a good hope through divine grace will bring us to glory at last. You will find it best to keep your eye upon your many mercies, while you must endure your various perplexities. Let none of them dishearten you, the Lord is on your side, on him cast all your care, he can make darkness light before you, and crooked things straight; and he promised to do this for the blind; and that he will not forsake them. See Isaiah xlii. 16. So that you may boldly say, "The Lord is my helper, I will not fear what man shall do unto me:" Heb. xiii. 6. "The Lord is my light and salvation," said David; "whom shall I fear? the Lord is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?" "Wait," said he, "on the Lord, and be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait I say on the Lord:" Psa. xxvii. 1, 4. "I was brought low," said he, "and he helped me:" cxvi. 6. The experience of the ancients is recorded for our instruction and encouragement. We in their case see what troubles we *may* have, and what help we may expect. Their tears are dried, and so shall ours. They had their pangs to bear, and we must not expect to escape our portion of the griefs; nor should we doubt our interest in the blessing promised, if we are promise holders. "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" said honest Job, ii. 10. What are all our troubles? While we have food and raiment, said the tried apostle, let us be therewith content. "Godliness with contentment is great gain:" 1 Tim. vi. 6, 8. Cast an attentive eye over Paul's catalogue of difficulties in 2 Cor. xi. 23, 28. What think you of his case? What think you of your case, when set against his? Yet, you know he was a servant of the Lord,

he was following his divine Master, he was serving the churches. The Lord nevertheless permitted him to be sorely tried by the men of the world, and by various calamities, and by false brethren amongst the rest. And besides, he was plagued with a body of sin and death: Rom. vii. 22, 25. Does not a sight of this man's difficulties make yours appear less? But, he said, "I can do all things through Christ who strengtheneth me. Neither count I my *life* dear to me, so that I might finish my course with joy:" Acts xx. 24. Now you profess to be loved with the same love, to be redeemed by the same Saviour, and to be led by the same Holy Spirit that Paul was. Then join him in extolling the amazing grace of your God in Christ. Take up your cross daily, whatever it be, and asking help and profit by bearing it, hold on your way to the end. It is *a little, a very little while*, and we shall have done caring, and vexing our souls with earthly objects, however interesting they may now appear to us. Our lease is very short! the Lord help us to obtain satisfactory knowledge of a heavenly freehold, eternally prepared and assigned to us, in him who is the primitive Heir of all things; that as his joint-heirs we may overcome, and inherit all things, *with him*, in glory. In this blessed hope I remain,

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

Mrs. S. unites in kind regards.

LETTER 84.

TO THE SAME.

April 21, 1843.

My esteemed Friend,

Grace and peace be ever with you, through the knowledge of our enthroned Saviour.

I am thankful to be able to say respecting myself, that I am better than I could, in so short a time, have expected to be; and I now am induced to hope that I shall be returned to my official employ among my beloved people in Salem. I am glad to hear that they have been well supplied in the labours of our brother Murrell. The Lord will send by whom he pleases, where, and when. O how great is his goodness, that he will send at all.

His conduct in connecting creatures with himself; and this earth of man's abode, with the upper world of his residence and glory; his gathering together in one, all things in heaven and earth, even in Christ, is a vast expression of his wisdom, grace, mercy, and power, that will astonish angels and men, for ever and ever. No one could *expect* such a disclosure I am sure. It could never enter the heart of man, fallen or unfallen, that God had prepared such things for them that love him; but he has freely revealed them, to them that love him. To his apostles extraordinarily, and to his saints in general, by his Spirit and through faith: 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10, 12.

And when we consider the millions of our race, and how small a part of them ever become acquainted with those heavenly mysteries, how wonderful is the grace that *we* among the rest, should have been chosen to know them! Our debt of gratitude must be ever paying, and yet unpaid;

“ Oh! for this love, let rocks and hills,
Their lasting silence break;
And all harmonious human tongues,
Their Saviour's praises speak.”

This is a theme in which my friend can *at times* rejoice, and so can I. How incomprehensible is Jehovah's inseparable love! how wonderfully diversified are the expressions of it; and all in and through Christ, who is the greatest gift of it. It is the source of all saving acts and influences, and the sure bond of all spiritual union. By this love we are drawn into the way of salvation, and drawn to Christ as the only, and all-sufficient Saviour of his chosen people. By it we are brought to love the Lord, and one another; we come by its influence to love our Saviour's doctrines, promises, precepts, and ordinances. Divine love, therefore, sheds its holy influence through our lives, and becomes evidenced through our conversation and behaviour. It is sure to produce hatred to sin, humble views of ourselves and our services, and leads to a serious and hopeful attendance at a throne of grace. In these you will see yourself in measure, and see your pastor also.

I can only say we unite in christian love,

I remain, your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 85.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 19, 1843.

My dear Sister Sarah,

I was very sorry to hear of your again falling to your bodily harm, and truly hope you will retain no lasting effect thereof, so as to disable you for your usual pursuits in life. It is a great indulgence in the latter stages of our shortening journey, to retain our senses, and the use of our bodily limbs. Any privation subjects us to some pain and inconvenience; but, my friend, how great the mercy to be kept from falling into open iniquity. Soul falls are far worse than bodily ones. A guilty conscience is more trying to bear than bodily bruises; it impedes our religious freedom before the Lord our God, and makes a man hang down his head in the society of his fellow professors. But our bodily infirmities will rather excite their sympathy and induce them to shew us kindness, in the day of our suffering. Our bodily injuries do not hinder our looking to the God of our mercies, but sometimes are means of quickening our attention into greater earnestness in seeking his favour. Mr. P. said your eyes were affected, and that you were unable to bear the light. Be it so, still it is only the natural light you cannot well bear: blessed be the most High God, you can bear the light of the gospel, the light of his countenance, the light of true knowledge, and the light of his manifested glory, in the face of Jesus Christ. This gives you no pain. O no, you live under that blessedness which David speaks of in the lxxxix Psalm, where he says, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound, they shall walk, O Lord, in the light of thy countenance. In thy name shall they rejoice all the day; and in thy righteousness shall they be exalted."

Now this is your case, this knowledge of the gospel sound you have had for years; and have acknowledged an all-present God, in the light of whose countenance you have been walking, and sometimes in his name, his grace, and his presence rejoicing. And to his given righteousness you are still looking, as that covering and excellence in which you hope to be justified and exalted at the bar of God, and in the kingdom of righteousness on high. The righteous shall go into life eternal, and shall shine as the sun in the kingdom of their Father, Matt. xiii. 43; and xxv. 46.

At present you are called to rely on his word ; to endure all the frailties of this mortal life, with humility, hope, and patience. Cast your burden on the Lord by humble prayer. All things are in his hand ; and he can render those things very useful, which in themselves are very painful.

I shall be glad to hear how you are when you can write five lines to tell me. I shall pray for you though not with you.

Believe me your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

Mrs. S. unites in kind regards.

Mrs. Ramsey has written to say that she must withdraw from us, and thinks of uniting with Mr. Curtis.

LETTER 84.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 17, 1844.

My dear Friend,

For your kind present of sweet things I render my kind thanks ; I find your gift in making time pies has in no degree failed you, they are good, very good.

We can hardly call them Christmas pies for they appear before the time, but the name is of no real consequence when the things named are very good, nor can they arrive too soon ; and when things are not good a name is of no satisfaction. Excellent things will commend themselves, whoever tastes them is ready to own their worth.

This is plain truth in regard to the things of our blessed Saviour. His things are above improvement, and beyond all price. This is not merely a doctrinal fact, but thousands can attest the truth of it from a trial of the things for themselves.

On Lord's-day evening we glanced at the life of which our Saviour is the root, by saying it was a life of faith, a life of hope, a life of prayer, a life of obedience, a life of self-denial, a life of holiness, a life of heavenly-mindedness, a life of exercise and trial, a life of distinction from the world, with other like characters.

We then observed our text spoke of a *treasure*, a *treasure*

surer, and a *treasury*—life is the treasure, Christ is the treasurer, and God the treasury. Our life is hid in God, hid in the purpose of *his will*, hid in his covenant of redemption, and in the promises thereof. Paul laboured to make Jews and Gentiles see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the world hath been *hid in God*, Eph. iii. 9. And to the Corinthians, he said, “we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the *hidden wisdom* which God ordained before the world to our glory.” Our Lord has said, “I thank thee, O Father, Lord of heaven and earth, because thou has *hid* these things from the wise and prudent, and hast revealed them unto babes,” Matt. xi. 25; Heb. v. 13; 1 Cor. iii. 1. Here we have the great scheme of salvation *hid* in God; from eternity *hid* in his mind, and hence brought into time. But we had to observe further, that this life was *hid with Christ* in God. Derived life had its first existence in the complex person of Christ. He was the *beginning* of life, Col. i. 18; Rev. iii. 14. The pattern of life to all, and after whose holy and happy being, as the glory-man, all his brethren adopted in God’s will, were to be formed, Rom. viii. 29. The life then was *hid* in the constitution of Christ’s person, in his federal headship, in the merits of his blood and obedience for our salvation, and in his resurrection and intercession. All these formed the sovereign spring of holy and eternal life: as was also the very *principle* of our new-birth, for this acts as a living spring, springing up into everlasting life, John iv. 14. Hence we inferred the *value* of this life, and its *secrecy* and *safety*. But alas, how little do we know of those amazing ways of divine wisdom and grace. How vast are the depths of eternal mercy! Let us however aim to glorify God by the little we do know. True faith dwells on the person and merits of Christ. Thus may we live until vision is gained in the higher church above.

Mrs. S. unites in christian love,

With your affectionate pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 85.

TO THE SAME.

Feb. 5, 1845.

My christian Friend,

I have said to you before what I hope you will observe, that if through my many engagements and the increased slowness that awaits me in doing my work, I do not directly make a written acknowledgment of your repeated favours, I nevertheless feel as truly grateful as though I ever so formally expressed it in words to you. The *unthankful* are placed next door to the *unholy*, 2 Tim. iii. 2.

I am also moved to offer you my thanks for your generous subscription towards the removal of the debt owing to the treasurer at Salem. Help in need is help indeed; I hope the great Head of the church will richly repay your kindness, Prov. xix. 17. Should the friends regularly subscribe only one penny per week it will obviate our difficulty in an easy way; and if not, the will of the Lord be done. Every branch of his true church shall be kept alive for evermore. And though it be right to specially wish for the prosperity of that part of the Lord's cause where we are stationed, yet should the Lord have determined otherwise, we have the satisfaction of knowing we have desired it in submission to his holy will, and of also knowing that all the ransomed of the Lord Jesus shall surely come to upper Zion eventually, oppose who-ever may. None can stay his hand or hinder the execution of his will. He is saying, I will do all my pleasure, I will work and who shall let it. Isa. xliii. 13; xlv. 10, 11.

The ways of our God are often very mysterious and past finding out, and this at once proves that we are to walk by faith and not by sight, 2 Cor. v. 7. "Where reason fails with all its powers, there faith prevails, and love adores." Faith is more precious than our eyes, for it is inseparable from endless life, which cannot be said of natural sight; seeing many have eyes and see not, ears and hear not. What are all things here? They are vapouring before us awhile and then they disappear, or we are called away to value them no more. Well may it be said this is not our rest, the *mind* is constructed for nobler things, and *requires* under gracious

influence, an enjoyment of the perfections, preparations, promises and performances of its almighty Parent.

When I remember your period of life, your widowed estate, your great distance from Salem's doors, your persevering attendance, and generous conduct, I am encouraged to hope that your labour is not without some real benefit, and that the name of our Lord is glorified in you, and by your life and deportment. I am sure you are a praying woman, and I request an interest in your breathings when you appear before the throne of our Father who is in heaven. May the Spirit of grace sweetly assist you to tell your tale and spread your wants before the seat of mercy, and in the great Redeemer's name. Mrs. S. unites in kind regards with

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

Remember me respectfully to your servant.

LETTER 86.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 3, 1845.

My esteemed Friend, in the bonds of mercy,

Many are the warnings afforded us of the mortality of the houses of clay in which we dwell, and of the growing shortness of our leasehold possession. Infirmities of different forms assail us, and if one for a while retires, another knocks at the door and demands admission, so that we are not long at rest. The Lord sees our heedlessness, and the need of repeating his notice, that our stay is not to be very long, and that we are to be ready. O, serious thought! Ready for what? To meet a fellow mortal? O no! but to meet God. Not to take an earthly journey, and then return; but to enter on an eternal change—to become a member of another kind of community, widely differing from anything we have seen on earth, even a heavenly state: of this you have been many days an expectant, and in appointed ways inquiring after it, and at times receiving gladdening intimations and evidences of your interest therein.

We had not heard until Lord's-day of your affliction. I

am well aware that being unable to attend the worship of God in your usual way is a trial to your mind, in addition to the pains of body in which your disability is seated. But our times and our pains are under his control, in whom is all our hope. *Reading, meditation, and prayer* are still offering you their aid, which, under God, I trust you will find to render you help; these are constant means through all the vale of life, in general. You are not unacquainted with them, I am persuaded, and the more you employ them, the more you will value them.

I am sorry to lose your attendance among us; but I daily find myself called to suffer loss. While I cannot have your presence, I will hope for your prayers; that my strength may be renewed from time to time, and that sinners may be called to the Saviour, and saints become joyful in his holy name. "There is nothing too hard for the Lord, he can do all things," Job xlii. 2. We do not now look for miracles, but we may look for mercy. He that helped us, will continue to help to the end.

I have been trying again to leave off my medicine, and am, by consequence, so affected, I know not how to bear myself; and now fear that I shall be obliged after suffering two nights and days, to take it again; for I cannot do any thing scarcely. O what an imperfect state is this mortal life! What ruin has sin entailed on the family of Adam! How important is the hope of an eternal rest! Be of good cheer, my sister, we are in the last stage of the journey. The cares, the perplexities, the losses, the pains, the griefs, the glooms, and depressions, will soon have passed by. Happy the saint who can live by faith in the midst of all the confusion of this world. Happy the man who can regulate his measures in his business by discretion, who can watch as well as pray. If we act imprudently, we must smart for it: such a man lays on heavy burdens, while he at the same time professes to pray them off. Much of our sorrow is of our own procuring in passing through the vale of life. All our mercies are of God's giving, and they will last when sufferings are ended. This is well for us. God bless you, my friend, and be with you night and day. I hope you will be restored, and appear before God in Salem.

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

Mrs. S. and her sister desire their kind regards.

LETTER 87.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 23, 1845.

My christian Friend,

Great is the goodness of our God; every new day repeats his praise. The river of his good pleasures never runs dry. Happy they whom he causes to drink thereof: *Psa. xxxvi. 8.* How numerous are the streams in which it flows abroad! No want occurs which our good Father had not anticipated, from our infant hours to the latest of our time. "Truly God is good to Israel," said David, "to such as are of a clean heart:" *Psa. lxxiii. 1.* Such an heart is of his own making; hence he cried, "Create in me a clean heart, O God." Give me to experience the merit of cleansing blood through living faith; that my heart may be reckoned as one for which the dying Saviour shed his blood. "Wash me," said David, "and I shall be whiter than snow." A clean heart is therefore one in which the name of Christ is of great influence, one in which the Holy Spirit dwells with purifying effect. Such an heart detests iniquity, abhors a lie, loathes its own vileness, and cleaves to the cleansing blood of the Lamb, by faith and hope, in love and reverence; and there it wholly trusts. To all who so believe, he is precious. And blessed are all they that trust in him. These things to you, my friend, are evident. You know whom you have believed, and your language is, "I had fainted unless I had believed to see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living:" *Psa. xxvii. 13.* And you also say, "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life:" *xxiii. 6.* We infer the future from the past and the present. Whom the Lord begins to save he never abandons. His every day's language is, "I will never forsake thee."

I am glad to find you are able to get out, and hope you may further gather strength before you go hence to be seen no more. To be strong in faith, however, is the best ability. This fits us for death as well as for life. I had a sweet time at Salem last night, on the first clause of *Heb. x. 15.* "The Holy Ghost also is a witness to us." When his power is granted it makes all things easy, and labour becomes rest.

But I have to thank you abundantly for another basket of pies; fourteen tokens of your kindness to

Your Servant in the blessed Gospel,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 88.

TO THE SAME.

Thursday, Mar. 5, 1846.

My dear Sister in the grace of our God,

For your many kind remembrances of me I offer my unfeigned thanks. May his goodness reward them all by the plentiful communications of his immeasurable grace through Jesus Christ, our great High Priest and Advocate. What a mercy for us to have such an Interposer to carry on our cause before the eternal throne of uncreated Majesty. Our final salvation is every day approaching, and is many years nearer than when we first believed: Rom. xiii. 11.

While the great wheel of providence rolls round, fresh scenes appear to our view, though to him in whom we trust, there is nothing new. "He knoweth all things from the beginning of the world:" Acts xv. 18. Our times are always in his hand, which shews us where we are to look for help in every time of need. We shall need his further grants to prepare our poor feeble minds to meet our future trials, and to assist us to bear them in a Christ-like manner. We can little conceive what those pains were which he endured for us. Gethsemane remains a memorial of those agonies which caused a bloody sweat. May the recollection of his inseparable love, expressed in those awful sufferings for us, strengthen our poor timid minds to face whatever trials our heavenly Father may have numbered for us. We have, my dear sister, so much of the road behind us, that though our winter may be sharp, it must be short. Besides we have good reason to expect that our strength shall be equal to our day: Deut. xxxiii. 25; 1 Cor. x. 13.

What our Lord said to Paul, we may take hold of to uphold us. Paul, after having been caught up in a kind of trance into paradise, had some very heavy trouble laid upon him, lest he should be exalted above measure, which he called a

thorn in the flesh ; for its removal he, at the first, was anxious, and he prayed thrice, that is repeatedly, that it might be taken away. But all the answer he could get was, " My grace is sufficient for thee: for my strength is made perfect in weakness:" 2 Cor. xii. 9. His mind was tranquillized, and he said, " Most gladly therefore will I rather glory in my infirmities, that the power of Christ may rest upon me."

O that in our thorns we may be brought to a like conclusion. If our Lord's name may but be glorified through our smart, thereby we shall have reason to submit to whatever it may please him to lay upon us. " For none of us liveth to himself, and no man dieth to himself. For whether we live, we live unto the Lord, and whether we die, we die unto the Lord; whether we live therefore, or die, we are the Lord's:" Rom. xiv. 7, 8. This interest will prove sufficient, come what may. It will see us through all events, nor can the last enemy destroy its powerful effects. Be looking away from time affairs, and setting your thoughts on heavenly realities, where Christ sitteth on the right hand of God: Col. iii. 1; Acts v. 31; and vii. 55, 56. " The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." Accept the best wishes of

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

Mrs. S. unites in kindest regards.

LETTER 89.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 15, 1846.

My dear Sister in the relation of Grace,

The connexions of this life must all soon have an end; but the interest of grace is of endless duration. It is that to which all others are subservient, and finally terminate. We are destined to pass through nature into grace, and by grace into glory. As our birth into this world is connected with sin, so it is with suffering. One lot awaits mankind in

certain respects, we all find we are born to a life of imperfection, of care, tribulation and sorrow, though in very different ways they assail us, and in very different degrees. We spend the early days of our sojourn without any conception of what awaits us in the decline of life. And in this our ignorance is our advantage. God in mercy to his frail and dependant creatures hides from them what would embitter the jocund days of youth and vigour. He keeps off our infirmities frequently until we are able to bear them, and until we have filled up our duties in certain relations, and so can have more leisure to undergo further trials. He gave you great strength for many years, and thus enabled you to occupy your station in the sphere of life assigned for you, with some satisfaction to yourself, and some help and comfort to your companion in life. During that favoured time, you were enabled to realize that sufficiency which is *now* a comfort in your declining years, and a great convenience in a time of bodily affliction. The Lord has changed your cross, without changing his love and mercy towards you, and without endangering your final crown of righteousness and glory.

He that brought you through the by-gone years of your earthly pilgrimage, is not less able to sustain you in your remaining days, whatever may be your circumstances. One thing is for your encouragement, rest is before you. It is certain our sufferings must be comparatively short, although they may be sharp. For though you are not quite so far advanced in years as I am, yet the journey is not long. We are, my sister, better off than many of our brethren. We are not called to go a way that none have gone before, we have many whom we can call to mind, who have professed the faith that we do, who have gained the promised land, through sickness, pain, sorrow and death. We must not expect any private way, different from our brethren and sisters. If any extraordinary suffering be assigned us, let us hope uncommon help will be afforded us. "My grace," said Christ, "is sufficient for thee, Paul." The same grace is sufficient for us. May the good Spirit of the Lord strengthen us to rest in the grace of our Head and Saviour, to the latest hour. He that chose our persons, chose our exercises; he that chose our heaven, chose in what manner we should arrive at it. "Some are gone up from great tribulation: Rev. vii. 13—15. I am much tried with a

cough, which is violent at times. O that my patience may not fail, and the same is sought on your behalf, by
Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

I expect to preach on Friday morning, the 25th, if spared and enabled. Christ is enough. Mrs. S. unites in kindest regards. Kind regards to Sarah. Isa. iii. 10. 11.

LETTER 90.

TO THE SAME.

May 20, 1847.

My dear esteemed Friend,

We seem to be both of us called to the bank of the river, as if our time for going over was at hand. A change of worlds is a serious change, take place whenever it may. It is *natural* for humanity to feel a reluctancy: but we are professing to *live by faith*, and not by sense. The sayings of the Lord are all designed for our direction and comfort through faith. One saying is, "In all their affliction he was afflicted:" Isa. lxiii. 9. Again, "His soul was grieved for the misery of Israel:" Judg. x. 16. "He that toucheth you, toucheth the apple of his eye:" Zech. ii. 8; Ps. xvii. 8; Deut. xxxii. 10. These sayings shew the near interest of God in the sufferings of his people: his great sympathy with them, as grieved for them: the very quick and tender sense he has of the injury done them, (the eye is a most tender part) and his quickness in protecting his people from essential injury. He secures, in many cases, their advantage, even when he hinders not their suffering. He can avoid *harming* them though he may not avoid *paining* them. Our God treats us as immortal beings, and keeps a constant sight of our *spiritual* and *everlasting* well-being. We are apt to be more careful about our frail bodies, but he is especially mindful of our undying souls. I fear you are suffering in the flesh; but I hope it will be your favour to enjoy the great end of your creation, election, redemption, and holy calling. Soon the fleeting days of our trials and our tears will have passed by. This we know by faith, and the shorter and lighter we can make them by believing, the

better. It will be well if we can make all our trials subordinate saviours; if they all bring us nearer to our prayer-hearing, and promise-fulfilling God, in and through Christ Jesus.

It is possible that you, my afflicted friend, may, like your frail Pastor, be sometimes thinking forward, about what greater sorrows may be remaining. If I now suffer so much in getting my breath, what shall I do on my infirmities becoming increased? Perhaps my dear sister has been imagining what may be *her future* grief. But the future we cannot know, nor can we be well aware of the amazing grace which our covenant God has laid up for our future use, and sufficient support. "O how great is his goodness which he has laid up for them that fear him; and which he has wrought for them that trust in him, before the sons of men:" Ps. xxxi. 19. As our wants shall be, so are the supplies which he has sovereignly prepared for all them that love him. He has also said, "Fear not, I am with thee." "I will fear *no evil*," said David, "*for thou art with me*: thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." The official care of the good Shepherd inspires a true courage. The Shepherd is tender of his flock, he considers what they can bear, and fits the burden to the back that is to bear it. He is ever saying, "Call on me in the day of trouble, I will deliver thee." Then we cannot say that we have no one to whom we can spread our griefs, and who will hear our complaints. Frequent intercourse by prayer, tends to lessen the weight of our affliction, and elevates our minds above the gloom which pondering over our difficulties is wont to create.

I am waiting in hope of relief by cessation from labours, and by a change of air: but well I know without God's blessing all is vain. I trust it may be a benefit to me, though at present I cannot say much as to benefit—but the time is short.

May the rich enjoyment of Christ by faith bear you up to the end. He is your all, and the all of

Your enfeebled but affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

Remember me to Sarah. Peace always and by all means. Mrs. S. expresses her Christian love.

LETTER 91.

TO THE SAME.

July 21, 1847.

My highly esteemed Friend,

The boundless love of God in Christ be ever with you, and be your support when flesh and heart faileth, and "the strength of your heart, and your portion for ever:" Ps. lxxiii. 26. There is nothing but divine favour that can sustain us in the day of felt weakness, suffering, and hastening death.

How great then is the mercy of God towards you; in that he has opened to your mind the riches of his electing and redeeming grace in the Lord Jesus Christ. This amazing source of salvation, has been in some good measure unveiled to your mind, before your mortal body became so powerfully assailed by threatening disease. Your safety was discovered, before your immediate danger appeared.

"The Lord was ready to save me," said Hezekiah. In his merciful and sovereign acts of grace he anticipates our coming difficulties, and lays up a suitable relief for us under the calamities which await our subsequent days of sojourn in this weeping wilderness. He knows before, and at once, what we come to understand by degrees: now a little, and then a little. Some few years ago, *you* had no thought perhaps of the manner of assaillment under which you now suffer; but the great God, in whom you daily confide, foresaw your affliction, and has determined its time of continuance, and ordained the help you shall have to the end of your days.

This being admitted, you have his hand to look to and rely on in all your trouble. His ear is daily open to your cry, his eye his ever watchful over your path, his hand is ready to help you under and through all your difficulties. His promise is ever sure, it is impossible for God to lie. You will see an end to all the entailments of iniquity, and possess an endless life of knowledge, purity, and joy, when the causes of present sighing and mourning are ended. Isa. xxxv. 10; and li. 11; and lxx. 20. It is the business of true faith to draw some succour from those true sayings of God: they are to be treated as certain assurances of what the Lord will accomplish in and for his afflicted people. Remember, your affliction is one thing by which you are

being brought to your heavenly home. And you know that he who enrolled your name in the book of life, also ordained the way and means, the time and manner, by which you are to attain to that life named in the Lamb's book.

I am glad to see you in Salem, but I hope you will not venture to the increase of your distress. Where natural ability fails, moral obligation terminates. But all is well in Jesus, your best life is hid, and bodily life is under the hand of your heavenly Father.

Accept the sympathy and good wishes of

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

Mrs. S. expresses kindest regards.

LETTER 92.

TO THE SAME.

Sept. 6, 1847.

My highly favoured and truly esteemed Sister in the Grace of eternal Adoption,

I was surprised to find that you were at Salem yesterday, and having refrained from speaking to you lest it should trouble you, and expecting you intended staying through the afternoon, we counted a more favourable opportunity of seeing you would occur after the ordinance. Herein we judged wrongly, and were sorry for our mistake.

The report of your suffering is truly affecting; it is hoped it will, though sharp, be short. There are five things on which you may muse, perhaps with some support to your mind.

First, that you well know that your affliction *is appointed of God*, 1 Thess. iii. 3; and that his will is in it; it must therefore have some good end connected with it, though that end continue to be greatly concealed from us. His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out. This points to the conduct required of us, showing that we are to entrust every affair of our numbered days to his managing hand. To him, therefore, you are always warranted to look for help in every moment of need. He that has willed your cross, has also willed your crown. "And he is Lord of all things:" Psa. lxxxiv. 11.

Second, your case, though a trying one, is not a new one : your brethren and sisters have many of them experienced the same before you, and doubtless some of them are *now* feeling the same calamity. One of the deacons of the church at Boston, under the care of Mr. Potter, is near his end, grievously suffering from a cancer. The Lord sustains him very blessedly under his sufferings: 2 Cor. xii. 9, 10.

Third, your sore affliction is working its own abolishment by its violence. If it exceed certain degrees, its subject sinks into the arms of death, and thus escapes the pains which had been long endured. Thus affliction produces deliverance from its own grasp. Extreme suffering seldom lasts long. The evil of suffering may sometimes be seen to destroy the evil of sinning, even in this world, in great measure: Rom. viii. 28.

Fourth, the end promised and hoped for abides secure, even when the trials of this life are greatly increased: bodily affliction and calamities will be the lot of the righteous while in this mortal state; but those things can never make God's promise of none effect. He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will, and often that which at first seemed to be utterly against us, proves at last to be altogether for us. *So Jacob found it.*

"Wait but a while, and thou shalt see,
His love in all that comes to thee."

Fifth, the privileges suspended, you can live and die safely without. Were it not so, God would not suffer those things to be cut off; for he can never permit any privation to befall his people, but what is consistent with his love to them. The means he withdraws, he will sustain you without, by his gracious presence. Your judgment is formed on all essential subjects; faith therein will minister all needful aid until vision comes: Heb. xi. 1.

I thank you sincerely for the many tokens of your esteem, and hope for grace to pray for you daily while we live. And now may the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace in believing, that you may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Spirit.

From your affectionate sympathizing Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

Mrs. S. unites in kindest affection. Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?

LETTER 93.

To MRS. MARSTON.

15, *Huntley Street, Bedford Square,**Nov. 16, 1835.*

My esteemed Friend,

I had intended writing to you before this time, but continual engagements and official duties afforded me not opportunity. Often have I had you on my mind, and also your kind sister. I am hoping you both are well, as also Mr. —; may the blessing of Israel's God rest on you all. I certainly should very well like to just drop in for a moment, and hear a few of your queries, but we are too far apart, therefore I must be content to convey a few ideas in this mute way. That we are related *in one sense* cannot be doubted, though it is of so very distant a degree, that we can scarcely feel any great influence attending it, except in those matters which yield us no benefit or satisfaction. Yet we are of one blood, and there is a great resemblance between us, when morally considered. Our first ancestor had been a good man, and our mother had been a good woman, but they both lost their characters before they had any family, so that we can derive nothing from them to promote us in this world or the next. In short, they lost all they had, and even their lives became forfeited, and all their then unborn posterity were losers too through them. It has been wholly by mere sufferance that their children have occupied the earth to this day; for if the Lord of the estate had proceeded against them according to their deserts, they must have been cast out instantly, and were all their offspring swept away, they would only be driven from an inheritance to which they can prove no natural right. As God we know thrust out the Canaanites, so might he unpeopled the earth without invading the rights of men, for they can shew no right. As their first father became a traitor, and lost all the covenant right, he could not convey his lost heritage to them. By one man's offence, death reigned; for that all have sinned in that one, and also like him. All men were considered in Adam when he stood an innocent man; and so all fell in him when he fell. Thus what the father of mankind became, all men became through his disobedience. This is called the doctrine of the fall of

man; and hence it is that all men are born in sin. The fountain being corrupt, all its streams must be so too. Cain was born like Adam, as fallen, not like him as he was by creation. Thus man in his best estate is fallible, and is but vanity. It was natural to Adam to love God as his Maker, Benefactor, and Lord; this power of loving God as required by the law of creation, Adam lost, and he became the enemy of his Maker. Adam did not lose his reason, but he lost the right use of it; hence we find his posterity though reasonable are not religious. God gives men reason, and men set up their reason against God. For this they have to give account at the bar of final judgment. God's elect are as truly the posterity of Adam as the rest. "We all," said honest Paul, "are children of wrath, even as others." From this wrath due to sin, which is the transgression of the law, the elect of God are delivered by Jesus Christ, as it is written, "He hath delivered us from the wrath to come." And again, "for God hath not appointed us to wrath, but to obtain salvation by our Lord Jesus Christ, who died," &c. The non-elect are left under the broken law to answer for their own sins, and all might have been so left without any injustice, for no one could have any right to be chosen and redeemed. A lover of sin may merit punishment, but he cannot deserve pardon. Of this every new born child of God is well convinced, and therefore despairs of salvation, except as it is granted through the redemption of Christ: "without shedding of blood there is no remission." As Adam was the federal head of all men, so Christ is the covenant Head of all the chosen seed of our God. All believers are his living members, and all who are chosen in him are his related members, who shall believe on him through his word, or have believed already. All who in heart believe on Christ are elect, though all who are elect have not yet believed, nor indeed entered into existence. As Adam's one offence, his first offence, was imputed to all his posterity by nature, so Christ's posterity by regeneration, have his obedience imputed to them. All in Adam were condemned,—all in Christ are justified. To be found in Christ was Paul's ardent desire. This, I trust, is your desire, and that you have renounced all confidence in your own acts; yea, in your spiritual graces of believing, hoping, loving, and adoring. These are not your Saviour, or the ground of your justification from all charge of sin

before God. Nothing but the sinless and unequalled obedience of Christ to the holy law of God, can be a fit ground for your discharge. He is the end, the fulfilling of the law for righteousness to every one that believeth. This I hope you are aware of, and in this one obedience are depending for acceptance with God and eternal life. Perhaps you will send me what queries arise in your mind on the preceding subjects.

Your christian friend and willing servant
In the Most High Redeemer,

J. STEVENS.

LETTER 94.

TO THE SAME.

Feb. 9, 1836.

My dear Friend,

Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied to you, through the knowledge of him who died for the worst of men, and whose invaluable blood has already cleansed millions of the vilest wretches that have trodden the earth, and still retains an undiminishable virtue to purify for ever. I think, in my former letter, I dwelt upon the headship of Adam our fallen parent; or I might have said our *unfallen* parent, for he ceased to be our head, and could no further affect us by his acts after he became a fallen man. It is now therefore proper that I should write to you of the second Adam, and of his Headship, and this is the bright side of the subject; although without a due knowledge of what one Adam had done *against* us, we could not rightly understand what the other had done *for* us.

The constitution of our Saviour's person as God and man in one Christ, the union decreed between him and the elect family of man, whom God eternally adopted for himself; the Suretyship of Christ, Heb. vii. 22, grounded in his Headship by election; the offices he sustains as the Mediator of the gospel covenant, being therein the Prophet, Priest, and King of his people; his incarnation, his obedience unto death, Phil. ii. 8; the merit of his sufferings, as the Son of God, and Head of the covenant of redemption, his resurrection from the dead, his ascension into heaven, as

the victorious Redeemer and High-priest of his people; and ever living there as their Intercessor,—are the substance of the true gospel of our salvation, and being truly known, and heartily believed, through the Holy Spirit, yield liberty, peace, and joy.

Therefore, as Adam acted for his seed, Christ as the elect Head of his seed has acted for them; and “is now made of God unto them, wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption:” 1 Cor i. 30; Rom. x. 4. You complain of your ignorance, but if God has revealed himself to you in the person and work of the great Mediator, you know the chief subject of knowledge, and have reason to bless the Lord continually for his grace toward you: for this is life everlasting to know God in the person and work of his beloved Son. For this excellency of knowledge the renowned apostle Paul was contented to suffer the loss of all things: Phil. iii. 7, 8.

You say, “I feel sensibly my *barrenness*, and a *great desire* for a more inward manifestation of my adoption into Christ’s family.” Your sense of unfruitfulness is of wholesome tendency, while accompanied with the great desire you mention: *the former* will promote humility, while *the latter* will cherish diligence and foster hope. It is not the manner of the carnal world to lament their barrenness in divine knowledge and holy attainments; nor can they really desire to enjoy an inward manifestation of their adoption into the family of God, for they rather seek the injury than the prosperity of that family. So far then your desire is in favour of your being a daughter of God Almighty: 2 Cor. vi. 18. “The Spirit himself beareth witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God:” Rom. viii. 16. He does this by convincing of sin as a depravation of our very nature, by shewing our hearts in a new light which he infuses, by softening our hearts to feel for the honour of God, of his word, of his worship, and the safety of our own souls and those of others, by pointing our souls to Christ as the end of the law, and as a fit Saviour for us, and as more able to save than is sin or Satan to destroy, by endearing his person and sacrifice to the mind, and *acquiring for him the highest seat in our affections*.

You tell me “that you have no hope but through the precious blood, and unequalled obedience of Christ.” Very good; this is to the purpose, this hope is a firm anchor in

every storm, and is therefore called "a good hope through grace:" 2 Thess. ii. 16. Your desire for more experimental assurance, and not wishing to be satisfied without it, is well; only mind you do not grieve the Holy Spirit, by whom alone you can be sealed to the day of final redemption. Mind where you place *the "present evil world,"* Gal. i. 4; while you profess to seek after your title to *the future holy world.* Aim so to act your part in the sphere of life in which God has placed you, *so* that earthly things may be kept subordinate to heavenly things. Take heed you are not put off with shadows for substances. I hope before this you have escaped from the whirlpool you mentioned in your letter, and that your thoughts are not so *wholly* occupied with earthly things, but that you can find time to speak to your Father God, who alone can bless your efforts in temporal and spiritual affairs. Strive to set first the interest of your immortal soul, and the private worship of your God and Saviour. Duties never clash. God is not to be robbed with impunity: Gal. vi. 7. Cast your care upon him, and pray for

Yours in Jesus,

JOHN STEVENS.

Accept my thanks for your kind present: I am glad I had written the day before to your sister. Remember me very kindly to Mr. M. and Miss T., who I expect received a letter dated Feb. 2. Ye are complete in him. My love to Mr. and Mrs. M. when you see them.

LETTER 95.

TO THE SAME.

May 20, 1836.

Esteemed Friend,

Your letter I find is dated March 26; it should have been answered sooner I acknowledge, but my avocations and engagements at different appointed anniversaries, have been and are so many, that I cannot get an hour for writing when I would. I therefore hope that you will not consider my delay in not answering your letter earlier any want of will to do so, but want of convenient opportunity

of doing so. Even now I am stealing time otherwise required, but having to be in Kent next week, I was not willing to omit writing longer, lest the enemy of friendship should tempt you to conclude that I had no intention of writing. For your good wishes on my behalf I thank you, may like blessings be yours abundantly; you speak of being a poor and needy branch of the Lord's family, who feel their daily need of strengthening grace. This, my friend, is no small favour, for the Lord's beggars are better off than the world's princes. He is very kind to all such, and has sent them many promises for their support. Your experience corresponds with that of the Psalmist, who says, "I am poor and needy, yet the Lord thinketh on me." You are therefore among the distinguished people of God. It is in the poor and needy that he sets forth the freeness and plenitude of his grace and mercy. The former in their unworthiness, and the latter in their sinfulness and exposure to punishment by his holy law. You mention your great desire to feel the precious blood of sprinkling applied to your own soul. Perhaps you may be looking for more than you are warranted to expect. The disciples were seeking Christ when he was already with them, and they knew him not. The blood of redemption is applied when it is enjoyed by a firm belief of its merit to atone divine justice, and to procure the free and full pardon of our sins. The application of blood in the types of old was by sprinkling it on the objects to be purified; it was made to touch them, and when it touched, it covered the object. The instrument used in sprinkling was a little brush made of a bunch of hyssop tied together with a piece of scarlet wool; and almost all things were by the law purged with blood, without shedding of which there was no remission. But now the blood of Christ, which was figured forth thereby, is not literally applicable; it is only spiritually applied as to the inexpressible worth of it, as being his blood who is, in one complex person, God and man. So we read that his flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed, while yet we neither eat the one nor drink the other; but by faith in the testimony concerning them, we inwardly acknowledge and affectionately receive them, as to their merit towards God to procure our pardon and insure our acceptance. The doctrine of the gospel is herein used instead of the hyssop-bunch, and preaching is the means by which it is truly

sprinkled on the people for whom it is shed. The Holy Spirit being present with the means to give them their effect in the hearts of all for whom Jesus died. Believing is the exercise of the soul under the ministry, and in the ministering medium and the receiving act of the enlightened believing soul, the Holy Spirit is the great official cause, acting by the means and securing the ends intended. Believed merit, then, is applied merit, where faith worketh by love and produces a degree of peace and joy. When the application is real, it is accompanied with a tenderness of conscience, or hatred of sin, or denial of all confidence in the flesh, or vindication of the justice of God and the demands of his holy law, a love to Christ and his humble disciples, a desire to walk in his ordinances, and to glorify God in our doings and sufferings. These things, my friend, you have experienced, I trust, and therefore the blood of Christ has been applied to your soul. Mark the above accompaniments of the application—in this application you are enjoying the priesthood of Christ, the knowledge by which you enjoy his merit in the light of his prophetic office, the influence it has over your heart and life in the enjoyment of his kingly office. You thus confess one Lord, one faith, and why not one baptism with the scriptural saints?

God bless you and keep you, and cause his face to shine on you and yours.

So breathes the ransomed soul of your

Willing servant in the gospel,

JOHN STEVENS.

He ever liveth.

LETTER 96.

TO THE SAME.

June 3, 1839.

My christian Friend,

I had thought of writing before this, but truly my journeys and labours have not left me opportunity until now, and now what shall I say? In an unmeasured field of varieties what can my limited powers select, what present to your notice! Christ is personal truth, his gospel doc-

trinal truth, his law preceptive truth, his ordinances symbolic truth, and his churches are or should be exhibitiv truth. The whole is Christ exemplified. He is all in all. From this sketch you may draw out some directive thoughts for your edification. Mark the importance of a right knowledge of God, and the sufficiency of such knowledge for all holy purposes. Interest in him is the root of immeasurable happiness, holiness, and eternal life. What think you of Christ? As your heart stands engaged to him or not, so your religious character must be estimated. Beware of this world's claims and customs! Value not its empty frivolities, they will not help you in a dying hour. All religious truth originates in Christ, and must tend to the right knowledge of him. Doctrine, promise, and precept are united in him, have been exemplified in his life, death, resurrection, and reign, and will never be forgotten by his friends. The glorified church will be an everlasting tablet of truth, an epistle of Christ, legible when monuments of marble have perished for ever. What is true of the whole, is true of part, true of every one contained in that whole. Religion therefore is personal in the members of Christ as it is in himself, only he is the original, they are but copies. He writes on them his new name. Doctrinal truth is employed in making Christ known in the glory of his person and offices to his newborn disciples through faith. They hereby come to live by their knowledge, and to adorn the doctrine of God their Saviour. They walk as children of the light, and work as children of the day saying, "This is the day which the Lord hath made." Preceptive truth gives not interest in Christ, but calls forth the evidence of interest. In this view it is highly important. It is the law of God in Christ Jesus: read Romans xiii. and Gal. v. The ordinances of God are symbolic truth, teaching by symbols the same gospel and the same obedience. This is true of adult baptism and of the Lord's-supper; but infant baptism teaches other things, nor can its doctrine be harmonized with absolute grace. The true church is exhibitiv truth, for all holy doctrines are exemplified in its members. Truth is embodied and reflected in all its members more or less clearly. May you witness to these sayings, and show forth their correctness before all around you. Thus your life

will be honourable and useful, and the cause of godliness will be seen through you as profitable for all things.

Yours very affectionately in the Lord,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 97.

TO THE SAME.

Jan. 28, 1837.

My esteemed Friend,

It has pleased my most merciful Father to permit me to be laid aside from my official employments for some time. I have not been out of my house since the 17th; but am hoping to resume my post again to-morrow. I have like many others been afflicted with influenza, and it so influenced me as to confine me to my bed several days. But my Lord could carry on the affairs without me, which pertained to his worship and people. I could not live without him, though he could manage his vast domains when I was shut in my chamber. Nay, he had to order all my matters among the rest, and has proved himself acquainted with all my ways, and my thoughts are not hid from him. I can perceive his remembrance of me in the conduct of persons 100 miles from me; some thoughts and good feelings must have existed at S—— not many days ago, or I should not have dined off turkey to-day, very likely, at least I may conclude not off *the* turkey for which my thanks are presented to you and yours. A finer bird need not be wished for, and not many of my tribe have been indulged as I have. The Lord reward my good friends abundantly and increase my gratitude to his Almighty hand.

I trust the best things have still the uppermost place in your affections, at certain moments especially, and that your desires after the greater knowledge and enjoyment of the person and work of Christ are kept alive. It is a favour to be alive, but better to be lively; it is well to have a healthy appetite, but better still to have it gratified. To find the affections ascending to the Lamb on the throne, to have the heart drawn upward to God, and to the spirits of the just made perfect in glory, to be laying up treasure there, by obeying commandments and believing promises

here. Oh, this, my friend, is blessed. The present world is very well for a time, and for a way to a better, but all who take it for a portion will find it of least worth, when a portion is most needed. It is a good servant; but a cruel master. It has made slaves of thousands, but not one free man. The place and its possessions are not to be blamed; it is man's sin that has turned it into a land of slavery, suffering, and death. It was not at first given to sinners, but to innocent creatures, and a most magnificent gift it was. But as by one man's offence it has become the habitation of rebels, the hospital of the wretched, the land of oppression and death, we had better be looking out for another Eden, another Adam, and by him another interest and life. All hail redeeming love, and the soothing voice of eternal mercy, from the seat of almighty majesty, proclaiming pardon to the guilty in this world of ruin. Cleansing blood, and covering deeds of righteousness are topics welcome and delightful in the ears of sinners doomed to die, by the inexorable sentence of a holy law. This is the theme which you approve, the remedy you require, the rest in which you rejoice when the sun is up and the wind gently stirring. I can but commend you to the chief Shepherd's care, he knows where you dwell, the thoughts you think, the words you say, the prayers you offer, and the praises you intend. May his merits on your behalf prevail, and his hand protect you through the maze of life, and sustain you in the hour of death.

Your affectionate friend in Jesus,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 98.

TO THE SAME.

April 4, 1838.

My esteemed Friend,

Grace and peace be with you according to the measure of the gift of Christ. Since you heard from me, I have been very ill, and confined to the house some weeks, but am again as well as usual. It seems the Lord's will that I should stand on the walls a little longer. May it be to his glory who died for me and rose again. If he be not honour-

ed, my life is lost, my existence a blank in creation. My glorifying him in my public capacity must be by ministering to the spiritual benefit of his ransomed people; it may be partly by contributing to the edification of my friends at S——, yet if it be so, it must be by small things, for I can say but little, and that little but feebly. I know no new gospel, nothing but the old story of redeeming love; it is, however a very wonderful story, the like has never been known; it is true, and thousands have found it so to their great salvation and delight. It is a lasting story, and never can be forgotten, but the songs of glory will perpetuate it in ages to come. It is a cheerful story, it gladdens the hearts of thousands, angels came from heaven to sing of it, and saints on the way to heaven rejoice in it. One sings, "He loved me, and gave himself for me." Another says, "He is my salvation and all my desire." Another, "He suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God." Another, "We shall see him as he is, for we shall be like him." The whole choir unite in saying, "Unto him that hath loved us, to him be glory and dominion for ever, Amen." Methinks you can join this triumphing song concerning the Lamb that was slain. You will freely own that he is worthy to receive power, and riches, and wisdom, and strength, and honour, and glory, and blessing. You cannot give him these things, but you may confess they are his by nature, and are displayed by him in redeeming his entrusted people for ever. I trust your deep poverty will be overruled for the increase of your spiritual possessions. They who have low thoughts of themselves are wont to entertain exalted thoughts of our adorable Lord. A Christ needed, is a Saviour regarded. A sinner who knows himself lost, has a Saviour in right and possession. Want makes a beggar, and qualifies one to receive a gift with humble gratitude, which would be taken by the rich as an insult. Don't carry your head too high, if your heart would be easy. Be thankful for what you have, and expect therewith a great deal more. Make a point of casting your care on the Lord, lest if you attempt to bear it yourself you should break down. You cannot ask too much, for all things are promised. Express my kind regards to Mr. M.; may the good Lord bless him with ears for the next world, that becoming acquainted with God in Christ, he may rejoice over all his present infirmity, and solace his mind with

the ravishing fact that ere long his frailty shall no more disqualify him for the most desirable of society, the most delightful of all employ.

Your friend in Jesus,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 99.

TO THE SAME.

March 29, 1837.

My dear Friend in the bonds of eternal grace.

You complain of my neglect in not writing, but I can assure you that my engagements are so many and various, that I have not an hour of leisure scarcely for incidental matters; rest satisfied, not want of good feeling towards you is the cause of my long silence. I am glad to find that you are returning to a state of convalescence, and also that you are able, in a good degree, to carve for yourself in spiritual things.

That Satan should make you a visit in a day of affliction, is no more than might be expected, but you seem aware of his meddlings, and shielded from his malice—you view yourself as a monument of the mercy of God your Saviour; such monuments Satan wishes to put down, or render them illegible, but what God has written with his finger on the hearts of his people, the powers of darkness can never obliterate. I perceive you have changed the vale of rebellion, for the mount of vision and anticipation; this is a good change, take heed how you reverse it. Hold fast that which thou hast received, that no man take thy crown from thy head: Rev. xii. 1.

Your wish to be kept from ever again being satisfied with any thing out of Christ, is excellent; keep to this principle, and you will do well: you will not be disappointed. On such high ground this world will sink above 100 per cent. in your esteem; you will *know in yourself*, like the ancient Hebrews, that you have in heaven a better and an enduring substance: Heb. x. 34; xi. 1; Prov. viii. 18—21; James ii. 5.

I am expecting to baptize ten to-morrow evening, for whom I trust our great Master died in love. I should be glad to see you at the head of the pool, and that in garments

indicative of your design of being with Christ your Lord in baptism. But this is not to be at present, the Lord's time is not yet come for that. I had rather expected your friend Mr. Atkinson, but he has not yet been to my house, though I believe he has been thinking of the matter more of late.

You refer me to Eph. ii. 13: it is a sweet passage to all who can consider it as addressed to them; and this I expect is your case,—you have been far off, and are now made nigh, not by virtue of your own works and sufferings, but by those of the Lord of life and glory. The words note a *past* distance and a *present* nearness. They express an actual, open change, wrought on the Ephesian idolaters in and through Jesus Christ. An interest in him is supposed in the words, as being *loved* and *blessed* in him, chap. i. 4; ii. 4; i. 3; also a being raised up, and made to sit in heavenly places, in him as their representative, even before their conversion; in consequence of which they became created in him, being God's workmanship, formed on purpose to serve him, and to shew forth his praise:" chap. ii. 10; Isaiah xliii. 21; lxiv. 8; 2 Cor. v. 5; Phil. i. 6.

This state of interest shews what *had been*, and what by regeneration they *had become*: they were dead, they afterwards were made alive: they were in the flesh, they afterwards were in the Spirit: they had been afar off, but by grace and through blood were made nigh. This is your own case, my friend. Here is a change in mind, will, and affections, and this outwardly signified by a change of conduct and conversation: Phil. i. 27; Tit. ii. 11—14. Under the old dispensation the Gentiles had no priest to take them near to God, no sacrifice offered by divine appointment for them, and they remained apart from the Jewish church until Jesus came, who removed the wall of separation between Jews and Greeks:" Eph. ii. 14—17. Now, therefore, we are taken into spiritual nearness by our great High priest, who has passed into the heavens for us: Heb. iv. 14. This is effected by our having one Spirit with the christian Jews, who were the first christian church, and with whom the saints at Ephesus had access by one Spirit unto the Father: verse 18. Such are made nigh by being pardoned and justified by the blood of Christ, and by the Spirit of our God: Rom. v. 9; 1 Cor. vi. 11; 1 John i. 7—9; and ii.

12. This nearness is also by being admitted into the household of God, and constituted a holy priesthood, and fellow-heirs of the same divine promise: verse 19; 1 Pet. ii. 5; and Eph. iii. 6. All made one in Christ, Gal. iii. 28; one new man, Eph. ii. 15; one body, verse 16; one temple and habitation of God through the Spirit: verse 21, 22. Holiness becometh this house of God for ever: it is set apart for his service and to his praise. Thus may you find it in your own experience, so prays your servant in the gospel of all grace,

JOHN STEVENS.

Express my christian love to your sister; may mercy crown her days, and Jesus be her joy. Remember me very respectfully to Mr. M., and to all friends of the best Friend. Farewell in Him, farewell.

LETTER 100.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 27, 1841.

My kind Friend,

Many thanks for your kind present, which came safe to hand, and for your friendly wishes that preceded it in a letter dated Sept. 16, which should have been answered before now; but I get old and slow, and always seem busied though I can scarcely see what it is that I have done. It is however my mercy that I can see in measure what my Lord has done. And it is on things done that my hope is fixed: though not without regarding things doing, of which God is the doer. Nor can I help noting some things of which misguided mortals are the doers. The Lord is permitting some peculiar steps to be taken that seem to assume an awakening aspect. Our ministers and churches have been for years drawing off from the doctrines of Christ to *Arminian* notions; out of these is now springing up *Socinian* principles, while as a fan to purge the floor, the Lord is suffering the rapid approaches of Popery, which bids fair to become once more the ruling power in this kingdom. I the other day received a friendly letter, from a clergyman in the country, wherein he says, "We live in very alarming times, and it is

an unspeakable mercy to be found on the Lord's side, striving together for the faith of the gospel. We shall have a hard struggle with the enemies of free grace, and it is my own opinion that the anti-protestant party will prevail over us, and that the true church of Christ will have greater affliction than ever yet she has endured. It will be 'the time of Jacob's trouble, but he shall be saved how out of it.' It will be emphatically the affliction of Joseph. As for our church, as we call it, its days, I believe are numbered; and as for dissenters, in general, they must fly off to all quarters. O what a mercy that the elect of God will then be knit together by the tribulations of the gospel, who before were separated by every trifle. Let us pray for each other, dear sir, that we may be 'valiant for the truth,' and 'quit ourselves like men.' The Lord has promised 'As is thy day, thy strength shall be.' 'We overcome by the blood of the Lamb, and the sword of the Spirit.'" The above was written to me on the 18th instant, and I must confess it seems but a just estimate of our prospects.

The Lord can fit his true followers for the treatment they may expect from the hosts of gospel pharisees. On him only can we lawfully depend, the sovereign gospel of our gracious Lord was never more intelligently hated than in our own times. Many are counting themselves the enemies of popery, while they are dexterously promoting its interest by training the public mind to its pernicious principles, in the very doctrines held by that hierarchy. The spirit of popery is prevailing, and its forms will be easily submitted to. Few think any thing of the kind, nor perhaps will expect the visitation before it is upon them. You, my sister, know him whose friendship is better than life, and to his kingdom and glory you are reaching out your hope, with humble prayer. May the blessing of heaven attend you, and your strength in the Lord be daily increasing. Express my kind regards to your good sister, and to Mr. M., whom may heaven bless with true knowledge and enjoyment of heavenly things. Time is short; eternity sure. That we may finally meet in Immanuel's kingdom above, is the prayer of

Yours in Christ the Lord,

JOHN STEVENS.

My christian love to Mr. B. "The Lord reigneth."

LETTER 101.

TO THE SAME.

Jan. 4, 1843.

My christian Friend,

I thank you for your kind present, and do not wonder at your complaining of my negligence, while I yet believe that if you had seen my affliction, you would have excused my not writing. I have had medical attention for weeks past, and have not been able some Lord's-days to be out at all, and others only once,—last Lord's-day I preached in the morning, and administered the ordinance of the Lord's supper in the afternoon—then I was obliged to send for a medical man, and am yet in a very feeble state. I kept my bed all day yesterday. But I am forgetting myself, and dwelling too long on an unedifying subject. Preachers should not preach themselves. I never heard of more than one man that could with good authority preach himself. In his case there was great propriety in his so doing; he could not find a more proper and more useful subject. It was all right for him to dwell upon his afflictions, because they were highly important to others, as they were *voluntary, vicarious, penal, and efficient*, in the perfect salvation of millions of condemned sinners. My affliction distresses, but it does not atone, even for my own sins, and certainly not for those of others. How extraordinary the plan of wisdom, that the stripes of *one* should prove the healing of *many*; “by whose stripes ye were healed.” This can only apply to spiritual healing, or the free and full remission of all our sins: “who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases.” Our blessed Saviour's wounds could not avail for our healing, had he not suffered *for* us: he was wounded *for* our transgressions. In his substitution, we acquire an honourable exemption from the stripes of punitive justice, and are wholly “delivered from the wrath to come.” This deliverance respects the whole family of God's eternal choice; for they were not only all chosen at once, but they were all redeemed at once; yet, as they are not all called at once, what Christ has done for them, is a subject of manifestation at appointed times. The Holy Spirit seasonably and powerfully makes known both the Father's eternal purpose, and the Son's absolute purchase

to all the election of grace, to their present and future salvation. This manifestation you have received, my friend; things done *in* Christ decretively, and things done *by* Christ meritoriously, are brought home to your soul by faith in the doctrines thereof efficaciously; so that you know *whom* and *what* you have believed, and therefore enter into rest. "We who have believed," said Paul, "do enter into rest." Ye are complete in him.

I hope Miss T. is well, and enjoying an immortal hope of endless salvation, in, by, and through our adorable Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. All earthly things are transient and dubious, sufficient to accommodate passengers, but by no means suited to a settlement. They are indeed designed for no more, though thousands aim to make them their portion and their all. I am glad to find that you are kept by divine grace mindful of heavenly things. It is your mercy to enjoy the ministry of Mr. B. He will remind you constantly of your better home, and of the sacred way that leads to it. He will point out the hindrances and the helps pertaining to your journey through the maze of time and of mortal life. You will express my christian love and best wishes to him. I am not likely to see him again, but I look for a meeting of friends where parting is no more. Make my respectful regards to Mr. M.; may he obtain mercy of the Lord on this side of the grave, and in the day of our Lord's appearing. Now, my friend, I must close my remarks, every line of which has been written in bodily pain and great uneasiness. It is not worth sending so far, but it may express friendship. Remember me kindly to your sister, and to all those friends who know me. Time is flying—earth receding—death approaching—Satan is roaming—the church is praying—angels are ministering—the Holy Spirit is testifying—Christ is interceding—mansions are preparing, and God's loved children are drawing towards home.

From yours in Ours,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 102.

TO MISS TAYLOR.

Feb. 3, 1836.

My dear Friend,

I received your good sister's letter duly and intend to write to her, but it seemed right to me to send a line or two first to you, which I had thought of doing long before this. So many and various are my avocations and duties in my station, that I am straitened often to find time for writing to my friends, although I much esteem them. I cannot but remember with gratitude, your kind attention to me in my visit to Swineshead, and not from any designed disregard is it that I have delayed writing thus long.

I hope you, and Mr. and Mrs. M., are well, to whom I pray you present my kind regards. Were it within suitable distance, I should feel pleasure in turning in for an hour's confabulation; but as distance lies between us, I must content myself with sending my mind and best wishes by a set of mute representatives on paper.

We have entered into the second month of another year since our interview at the villa, and are so much nearer to the most solemn of all changes, and to the most inconceivable of all scenes. How precious is that *one Book*, without which, dark indeed must this present world appear, and unknown must be the future! The whole of the present transactions of dying mortals is passing hence with the utmost rapidity, and the beholders are withdrawing one after another into another and more permanent state of being. What myriads have trodden the ground before us, as others are in progress to follow after us, when we shall have finished our pilgrimage of life and left the ground for ever! O the blessedness of a revelation that lifts the veil of future ages, and assures us that God has prepared for all them that love him a crown of glory which shall never fade away: 1 Cor. ii. 9, 10; James i. 12; ii. 5; John xiv. 2, 3; Heb. xiii. 14; 1 Peter i. 3—5.

I hope, my dear friend, you are living as one who is expecting to die, and desiring to live for ever in the kingdom of the holy and the blessed. A godly life in the knowledge of Christ is not only a present advantage, but it involves the higher interest of a future prospect. What can you make of this earthly state, but a way to another?

here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. Do you seek one to come? Is your treasure in heaven? Are your thoughts ascending thither in private moments? Have you a heart too large for all the world to fill it? Can you see the emptiness of worldly gaiety? Can you stand against it, or are you carried away with your eyes open?

You know I think that this world is no fit subject for us to make a portion of, he that builds his hope on perishable and fleeting things cannot reasonably expect permanent happiness from those mutable things. You are accountable to God—you are not perfect, and therefore must need his mercy. He that needs mercy cannot deserve it—he that has obtained mercy is on his way to heaven and God. He is self-denied, and self-condemned, nor can he look for pardon and for salvation, but through the substitution of Christ, or through his sinless obedience unto death in his stead. Christ is his only hope, and his everlasting all. Do you hither flee for shelter as a lost sinner? Is this your hiding place? Are you praying because your desires urge you to the practice? Do you pray in the name of Christ, and that for his sake the God of heaven will have mercy upon you?

If this be your soul's exercise it looks well. The Lord, the Spirit lead you into all truth, and give you great faith in the sacrifice of Christ, and great love to him who suffered the direful sentence of the law in the room of his chosen people. Blessed are all they that trust in him, and blessed they will be for ever and ever. When Christ becomes a guilty sinner's life, then death is become his gain, and heaven is his final home. I hear nothing from the villa, all is mute, each bottle corked if not sealed! I am hoping they are well, if you see them express my love to them for Jesus' sake. I hope to write to Mrs. Marston in a week or ten days. I mislaid her letter and thought I had lost it, but found it to-day, and find it has been written above six weeks, so that it is time to return an answer. Shall I hear from you? Whether or not I shall remain,

Yours very kindly,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 103.

TO THE TWO RANSOMED SISTERS, MRS. S. MARSTON AND
MISS TAYLOR.

(*No date.*)

Good Friends in good connection,

God be with you in all things. I am as usual in full work without wages, but not without reward in the work. It has been my lot frequently to hold a sword in one hand while I hold a trowel or a trumpet in the other. Good men did so in Nehemiah's day, and the devil is much of the same mind still;—the family of the Sanballats and Tobiahs is not yet extinct.

This however is not to discourage us, since the best cause in the world is in the best hands, as truly as it is opposed by the worst. To have some men against you is no small honour, but rather reflects an honourable aspect than intimates disgrace. Untried armour inspires no courage, as unsown corn yields no increase. But the chief warfare is in the town of Mansoul; what they call civil war is apt to be the most distressing—one of the greatest misfortunes that can befall a nation, some say.

Poor human nature has fallen into this confusion, nor can any one restore true order but the Almighty author of the constitution. To keep the malignant party under some degree of restraint, is about all that can be hoped for in this case. "The flesh lusteth against the Spirit, and the Spirit against the flesh, and these are contrary the one to the other, so that ye cannot do the things that ye would." The old man is not liable to weakness by years, but if you observe at certain times when his chain is somehow suffered to get more slack, he shows himself as vigorous as ever. This should put us on our guard. He gets his liberty sometimes by trickery—he will change his name repeatedly. They who are but slightly acquainted with his deceitfulness (Jer. xvii. 9) get imposed on, and are brought to no small dishonour. The ancient patriarchs and holy prophets got into trouble by listening to his artful pretensions. In one instance he overcame the meekness of Moses, and even the patience of Job seemed sadly upset by him, and as for poor David who had conquered his enemies all round about, he got him down and

rolled him in the mire over and over, and seemed to have taken away his proper senses for some time, until Nathan the prophet called him to his senses, and let him know where he was and what awaited him. And as for Solomon his son, great as he was in wisdom, this old man made a fool of him by employing a number of outlandish women who at once turned his heart aside, *even him*, Neh. xiii. 26. And our zealous brother Peter, O how was he misguided, under a pretence of saving himself from the apparent dishonour of belonging to Jesus Christ. "Let not the wise man glory in his wisdom, neither let the mighty man glory in his might, let not the rich man glory in his riches, but let him that glorieth, glory in this, that he understandeth and knoweth me, saith the Lord:" Jer. ix. 28.

The true David was attacked, but there was nothing in him for Satan to work upon. There was no old man in Him. What an amazing contrast between humanity in him, and in us poor worms. This is our mercy, that he could, and would, and did crucify our old man, that the body of sin might be destroyed. Sin shall not *hold* dominion over us, though it gain a *partial* advantage over us. It is our mercy to know that final victory is determined on our behalf. God's promise is a sure ground of safety. Clad in the best robe, cleansed in the best blood, led by the best Spirit, directed by the best Book, having in prospect the best heritage; we are induced to elect the best means for gaining the best end in the close of our days. To us Christ is all, truth is dear, time is short, death is a deliverer, heaven is home. My kind regards to all who love our Lord, and believe me, yours truly,

JOHN STEVENS.

Best wishes to Mr. M. Remember me to your good minister very kindly.

LETTER 104.

TO THE TWO HAPPY SISTERS.

Nov. 14, 1837.

My dear Friends,

May the good will of Him that dwelt in the bush be with you always. His favour is better than life, and com-

prehends all our portion in the untried world to come. His creatures are *vessels* of comfort to us while here, but he is the *spring* that fills them all for our enjoyment. It is very desirable to see and enjoy him in all things, in all friends, and through all changes. Being thus favoured, we shall, when every earthly object withdraws, be able to enjoy our all in him. The hour is fast approaching when our gracious Lord will no more be seen through a glass darkly, but face to face. "They shall see his face, and his name shall be in their foreheads," Rev. xxii. 4. Their relationship to the glorified Lamb and his right in them, shall be ever manifest; beholding his face in righteousness they shall bear his likeness, Psa. xvii. 15, as truly as the high priest of old had *holiness to Jehovah* engraven on his mitre, which was worn on his appearing before God, and this inscription was on his forehead, Ex. xxxix. 30. In agreement herewith, we read of one hundred and forty-four thousand having Christ's Father's name on their foreheads, Rev. xiv. 1. This company represents the royal priesthood mentioned by Peter, chap. ii. 9, chosen of God and redeemed by blood out of a fallen world; whose holiness is required to be as conspicuous as their countenances, that whose they are and whom they serve, may be truly evident in their conversation and deportment. This honours their Lord before the gazing world, and promotes christian love and mutual confidence among themselves. The honouring of God must never be severed from the salvation of his people. His honour is of more consequence than all our joys. May his good Spirit help us to reflect the light that saves us in all our journey to the world we seek and desire. Holiness to the Lord should be our aim in all our profession. It is the end to which God's loved people are chosen, Eph. i. 4, and their redemption is from all iniquity, Tit. ii. 14. None but the heaven-born children of God can truly hate what he hates, and love what he commands. Yet all religion short of this is vain. To love the Lord is to keep his commandments, 1 John v. 3, and without this love our religion is only nominal, and we should be instruments without life, giving sound, 1 Cor. xiii. 1; xiv. 7. Love is a labouring grace, 1 Thess. i. 3; Heb. vi. 10, and expresses itself in good doings towards God and his redeemed family, and in a due care for our own soul's profit and salvation. Its language is, we love him because he first

loved us, 1 John iv. 19. Aim my dear friends to set the Lord Jesus always before you in all his perfections and performances. Consider his omniscience and omnipresence, and that you are never out of his sight, nor beyond the reach of his aid. Dwell on the rich merit of his death as the Surety of his people, in your thoughts, prayers, meditations, and converse. Take heed what spirit you are of, evil tempers destroy inward peace of conscience. Watch to have God, truth, and conscience on your side, for if these be against you it will not avail who may be for you. Treat this world not as a final, only as a temporary home. Imitate not those whose hereafter you would dread to anticipate for your lot. Beware of a worldly spirit, aim to show yourselves the true followers of the Lamb that was slain. Pray to be more spiritually minded, for that will bring life and peace. Remember Christ is your perfecter, and in his obedience to the law you are to expect your honourable justification before God here and hereafter. His blood is the price of your freedom from bondage through sin, and the fountain opened in the gospel to all them that believe, for sin and for uncleanness: Zech. xiii. 1.

Remember me very respectfully to Mr. M., and believe me.

Yours truly in the gospel of God,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 105.

TO THE SAME.

Jan. 18, 1838.

My dear Friends,

I offer my thanks for your kind present, and for the interest you take in my health and welfare. The letter you saw in the *Herald* was one that had been inserted unknown to me, and had been written for many years; they ought to have given the date of it. I am this day so unwell with a cough, and suffer so much pain internally when the fit of coughing seizes me, that I cannot get any rest. I am obliged to decline preaching this evening. How frail a thing is man! easily crushed as the moth under the finger. This is however no small comfort, our

blessed Lord is able to do without our poor services. We may seem to ourselves to be of some consequence, and our fellow-creatures may imagine us to be so; but we are, at best but insignificant things before the eye of the august and sublime Being who rules the unmeasured universe of his creatures.

He managed the whole in his infinite wisdom before we crept into his vast empire, and he will carry it on with undisturbed order when we have left it. I am sorry to learn by your letter, Dec. 7, that Mr. M. was so unwell, and that his hearing became more defective. I hope he may by this time be somewhat better. It is a trial to him and to you, but a light one still, compared with what some are enduring.

May the God of heaven illumine his mind, and bestow on him his Holy Spirit, and thereby grant the earnest of a blessed hereafter, and this will render every present difficulty light, comparatively, and all will appear more easy to bear, and will tend to wean the mind from this floating bubble of a world which is apt to disappear while we stand gazing at it as it glides along. Beware of it, my dear friends, its smiles are very deceptive. While we make it the means of serving and exalting *Him* that formed it, we are putting it to a lawful use. But if we convert it into a veil to hide its Creator's character from view, we err injuriously. The very gifts of his providence are to call us closer to him, and not to encourage a neglect of him. All things, all events, have a voice of instruction, of reproof, or encouragement; and it is a mercy to hear that voice, and to govern ourselves accordingly. We are inheritors of many favours that might have been denied us without any injustice. And while we possess them what abundant reason we have to offer thanks to our Almighty Benefactor! Out of hell! What a forbearance! Redeemed to God! O riches of mercy and merit through our redeeming Lord and Saviour. God has favoured you with a comfortable home, and a rich supply of all your *real* wants, and as to your imaginary ones they are not worth house-room. The pardon of sin is worth more than all things else without it. Though one may say he owes nothing to any man, yet he is poor, and must at last be wretched if he be found under the arrest of divine justice. He that is just to God will strive hard to be just to men.

O the worth of Calvary's blood! Blood that bought the endless freedom of heaven's heirs!—blood that made peace for ever between God and his people!—that washed away all the sins of the elect world in a day, and for ever! It also opens heaven to all who believe, and for thousands who *shall* believe.

Surprising remedy! what moral disease has it not removed? Who has applied for a cure and not obtained it? Faith existing is a sure witness of interest in it. If faith be in you, then it is plain that Christ has bought you from all captivity. If he be precious, if he be your trust, if he be the example you imitate, if of him you love to hear, to muse, and to speak, his Spirit must be in you, Rom. viii. 9. He is all, you can need no more, heaven is his, the angels are his, and all are yours. I hear nothing from the villa—no letter—not a word. O friendship! I am not able to write more. May you never forget that time is silently passing away from you, Satan is watching to ensnare you, death is marching around you, eternity is just before you, Jesus is interceding in heaven, thousands on earth are praying for you, among these, reckon

Yours very truly,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 106.

TO THE SAME.

Sept. 19, 1838.

My esteemed Friends,

Since my return I have been called hither and thither in my Master's business, and though I have often thought of you, yet have not seemingly had time to write to you: I hope however you have seasons of intercourse with my Lord, while his servant is distant and otherwise engaged. "*In his favour is life*," said David; and you can say the same. His influence both enlightens the mind, and purifies the affections, and thus gives liveliness to the soul in heavenly things. As there is no being like Jehovah, so there can be no favour like his. It is that expression of the divine nature, whereby God bestows the richest blessings on the

undeserving, consistently with the rights of his justice, through Jesus Christ.

This favour or grace is the source and denominator of all blessings, doctrines, and persons found in Christ. So we speak of the blessings of grace, the doctrines of grace, and the heirs of grace, who are called a remnant according to the election of grace. This it is which has measured our portion as to present enjoyment and future prospects. It has opened heaven to its subjects.

Out of God's favour there is no holy and happy life, for it influences the whole existence of all the spiritual family of God, both on earth and in heaven. The fulness of Christ is a gracious one, and of it all his members receive: John i. 14, 16; Eph. iv. 7. Divine favour softens our corrections, and alleviates our sorrows, lessens our difficulties, and magnifies our advantages: Rom. viii. 28; Psal. xxxiv. 19; and cxxxviii. 7. It even adds sweetness to our very comforts, and cherishes a spirit of contentment and submission. "I have learned," said the tried apostle, "in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." What think you, my friends, of his scholarship? you have been sent to the same school, have you learned the same lesson? I cannot hear your reply, but I can partly guess at the substance of it. It is a difficult lesson, owing to our dulness, self-love, impatience and pride. Yet it seems to be well worth striving for, and would pay good interest for all the expense we might be at in gaining it. It is possible to a sinner, for Paul, though the chief of sinners, attained to it. Will you try at it, by meditation, prayer, and watchfulness? I address you in the singular, but I would be understood to include your kind sister, with best wishes for her success in such learning.

"In his favour is life," must be true in the experience of all the godly, though in different degrees of consciousness, and with difference as to times and circumstances. Happy are they who find favour in his sight as did Noah, Gen. vi. 8; Lot, Gen. xix. 19; Moses, Exod. xxxiii. 12—17; and xxxiv. 9; David: Acts vii. 46. The assertion sounds well from the lips of any saint, but especially from those of a sinner newly converted, a saint walking in darkness, Isaiah l. 10; and an heir of glory in the article of death, when taking a final leave of all terrestrial things!!

May this be our happy feeling in that hastening day.

Express my kind regards to Mr. M., who I hope is, with yourselves, in the enjoyment of health.

Remember me kindly to Mr. B. when you see him. I wrote to our friends at the villa on the 24th of last month, I hope they are well.

I must now conclude. Time is flying, sorrow is coming and going, the world is smiling and frowning, Satan is roaming and plotting, death is paying his customary visits, Christ is interceding, all saints are daily praying, the day of judgment is approaching, perfect salvation is at hand for the faithful in Christ Jesus. May you be found in him, is the wish of one who desires no greater safety and joy.

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 107.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 24, 1838.

My esteemed Friends,

Your kindness reminded me that I had not answered your letter, dated Oct. 22, 1838. Now therefore I answer the living through the lifeless, and present thanks to the former for the gift of the latter. I am not disposed to regard *mass*, though I have no objection to receive *turkey*. It will doubtless be to you a great comfort that Mr. B. is come to reside at Sleaford; this is another proof that the Lord favours his praying people in ways that they had not anticipated. Please to express my christian love to him, and my best wishes on his behalf; may the rich and sanctifying unction of the Holy One attend his private studies and public ministrations, and many seals be added to his labour; may grace, merit, and power, be constantly exhibited and exemplified in his preaching! Sleaford has long been under a thick cloud, *now* may the Sun of righteousness arise upon the people, and happier days be found.

I have been afflicted with a cold and distressing cough for several weeks past, which has greatly tried my frame, and partly hindered my employment in my public work; and still it remains to warn me of my mortality, and to excite me to look for the blessed hope which is laid up for me in heaven, and for all who belong to Messiah the Prince. His

people are continually gathering together from this our sinful world. Death is employed in dissolving their tabernacles daily, and the great day is preparing for continually. God is fulfilling the counsel of his will, and thus calling home his chosen family. The *world* knoweth not this, little supposing that the noiseless movement of his tribes from this Egypt is going on, and that their godly neighbours are being taken up to heaven, by their great Leader, while *they* are left to neglect and despise both the Leader and the remnant that is led by him. What a surprise will seize them, when they at last behold the very persons whom they despised, clothed with radiance and honour at the Lord's right hand! They *shall* know, said the Lord, that I have loved thee; this will no more be doubted when they shall have appeared in glory at the right hand of their royal Judge: Matt. xxv. 31; Rev. iii. 9; John xvii. 23.

Dec. 25. This is a high day with the superstitious and voluptuous. Alas! what stupid ignorance and folly has priestcraft imposed on the multitude, and how tamely do many of God's own people comply with Romish customs, which reach them through the daughter of the Roman mother. How dangerous it is to leave the sure guide of holy scripture for human customs! One false step leads to many more; the chain of iniquity has many links, and by taking hold of one you connect yourself with the whole chain. There is something in fallen men that leads them to prefer being legislators instead of being law-fulfillers. Hence, to invent rites and ceremonies, to change God's ordinances, to appoint holy days, &c., has long been the manifested presumption of erring mortals. Would men but ask, as Paul did, while human devices are urged on their attention. "Nevertheless, what saith the scripture?" Gal. iv. 33; they must be often apprised that the customs of the people are vain: Jer. x. 3. When neither divine precept, divine precedent, nor divine promise, can be found for any custom or form of worship, we may rest assured God is not honoured by it; but that on the contrary he is offended by such inventions being palmed upon him. He is insulted by the creature's presuming to *alter* his command, but more especially by man's *introducing what he has never required* with the pretence of serving and glorifying him. True religion does not consist in merely acting, but in doing what the Author of our being has commanded in his own word.

The Lord's Christ and the pope's mass, have no divine connection, therefore, we are to embrace Christ, and to reject the mass, as having no connexion with that worship which God has enjoined. The incarnation of the Lord of glory, is to us of infinite importance. This we are not to dwell upon on the 25th of December only, but on every day of the year. He was born to suffer and die for the crimes of his chosen people, and having put away their sins by the sacrifice of himself, he has ascended up where he was before: John vi. 62; Eph. iv. 9, 10; yes, he has gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels, and authorities, and powers being made subject to him: 1 Pet. iii. 22. Please to express my kind regards to Mr. M. on whom may eternal mercy rest, and also on you two favoured sisters, with

Your sincere Friend,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 108.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 26, 1839.

To the two saved Sisters, Grace and Peace, be multiplied through the Lamb that was slain.

Ransomed Friends,

The old year is fast winding up its many affairs, and having transmitted many to the untried state of futurity, will quickly give place to another approaching year, while our best interest is not measured by wasting and changing time, but by lasting eternity. *For ever* is an important term or clause, and must prove dreadful, while the length of merited suffering is its import; of some it is said, "these shall go into *everlasting* punishment," but of others it is said, "These shall go into life eternal." In this latter case, *for ever* is welcome to the reflecting, believing mind. It is encouraging to find that the duration and immutability of our Lord Jesus, are the substantial ground of our happiness, and while they refer us to the nature of our highest joys, they also mark them as ever-enduring to his honour and praise.

How many mercies has this ending year afforded which we have forgotten. And what long-suffering has our heavenly

Father continued while our sinnings have been daily evident before him. But his compassions fail not, therefore we are not consumed. This is the season in which the churches of Rome and England profess to celebrate the nativity of our adorable Saviour. And we dissenters must carelessly take their unscriptural language on our tongues. We can talk as flippantly about Christ-*mass* as they, as if we also could lend ourselves to his holiness, in our seasons as well as the children of the hierarchy themselves.

It is needful to remember the birth of our Saviour, not one day, but three hundred and sixty five days in the year: but many can only regard the event after the flesh. Eating, drinking, merrymaking of carnal description, are all the joy with most, as if Jesus Christ were the God of gluttony, and excess of wine, of banquetings and abominable indulgences. Whereas his visit to our condemned world was not to encourage such excesses, but to destroy them, and to redeem his chosen people from them, and to raise them to live a self-denying life to the glory of God. Christianity warrants enjoyments, but condemns excesses. The evil is not in good provisions, but in those who misuse them. Heaven prepared us a Christ, but the devil invented *mass*, *high* and *low*, the former with singing, the latter without. It is our place to take heed that our worship be not an exclusion of Christ, by adding to his name what does not belong to him, and so excluding him under a pretence of honouring him.

The enemy in our day, is serving up compounds instead of simples. He, in many places, does not directly deny the truths of the gospel, but he artfully mixes up human devices therewith, to destroy its native force. The old judaizing teachers did not flatly deny the doctrine of grace as a whole, but craftily blended the laws of Judaism therewith, among the Galatians, so as to render the gospel of no effect: Gal. v. 4; Rom. iii. 3; 1 Cor. i. 17. You are now better off at Sleaford, and may be thankful seven times a day for your privileges. God be with your worthy minister, and with you in hearing him, that by his ministry you may grow up into Christ in all things, and finally arrive where he is, for ever there to dwell, so prays

Yours in the best of Causes,

JOHN STEVENS.

Finally, farewell in Jesus.

LETTER 109.

TO THE SAME.

Jan. 14, 1840.

My kind Friends in the Chief Friend,

Many thanks for your present, which came duly to hand, and which I would have acknowledged sooner, but my numerous engagements have not allowed opportunity till now. I have repeatedly thought of your case since you stated it in your letter, respecting communion at the table of the Lord, which being a positive institution is wholly founded in the will of the divine Institutor. Inference and analogical reasoning can have no claim to determine any thing in such a case.

First, No instance appears on record of any of the primitive saints being admitted to the Lord's table, without their being first baptized. Indeed, it cannot be supposed there should, when the commission given by Christ to his apostles: (Matt. xxviii. 19, 20; Mark xvi. 15, 16,) is duly considered. He ordered his apostles to teach first, and then baptize those who should believe their doctrine; after which they were to further instruct them in all matters pertaining to their faith and practice as baptized disciples of Christ, according to his command. This plainly shews that all baptized persons are to be such as have believed, and are capable of receiving immediate instruction in all the will of the Lord. Not infants, then, but adults who could make a credible profession of their faith, are here intended.

Second, We learn from our Lord's words to his apostles, that all believers are bound, health and opportunity permitting, to be baptized after making a profession of their faith, in the death and resurrection of Christ.

Third, We cannot doubt whether the apostles understood their Master's commission, nor can we suppose they did not practise it, informing the churches everywhere. They, as inspired men, could not have more than *one rule*; as they ordained in one, so they must have ordained in *all* the churches: they had one Lord, one faith, and *one baptism*, and could therefore admit no such motly appearance amongst their churches as mixed communion: Eph. iv. 5; 1 Cor. vii. 17. and i. 10.

Fourth, Churchmen and Independents all go upon the principle, that you must be baptized before you can be ad-

mitted to the supper of the Lord. It is inconsistent, therefore, in them to complain that the Baptists insist on baptism as a term of communion, since they themselves do the same. But when they say they *are* baptized the Baptist says, no, I cannot admit infant sprinkling to be any baptism at all. The Independent can safely admit the Baptist is baptized, but the Baptist cannot allow that the Independent is baptized. One has scripture precept, precedent, and promise; the other has not. God can only be worshipped according to his own commands. To offer him service which he has not required, is *as great* an insult as it is to withhold what he has commanded: some have thought it *greater*.

Fifth, Now the question is, Have you been baptized? You say, no. Then you have not professed your faith in Christ by baptism, as is required in order to the fellowship of a christian church; the Holy Scripture being the rule of conduct. Hence it appears that you are not required to take the supper *before* baptism. Thus circumstanced, you, on being invited to the table, say, I am not baptized, and therefore am at present not scripturally warranted to take a seat there.

Sixth, But your inquiry takes another view. Your Independent friends say, Come to our table; we are satisfied you are baptized. You reply, but I must remember religion is a personal thing, and I believe I am not baptized; I cannot worship by what you believe, but by what I believe.

Seventh, Now your Independent friends, make another offer; they say, Then get baptized in your own way, and then you can come to our table. Again you say, I cannot *then* commune with *you*, because I cannot imagine the commanding will of the Lord to be *contrary to itself*: I cannot plead for baptism in my own practice, and against it by sanctioning yours. You further subjoin, if it please not the Lord to give me opportunity of worshipping him according to his own command, I must not think to honour him by the customs of men, however evident their religiousness in other respects may appear. A state of grace is necessary in order to a church-state, and to admission to the ordinance of baptism; nor can the order of the two ordinances be reversed or transposed, without denying the commission of Christ, and the practice of his apostles, and at the same time neglecting the true import and use of the institutions of our Lord. To willfully neglect the ordinances appointed

by divine authority is wicked, to alter and misplace them is as certainly bad, if not worse. You, my friend, can do neither, according to the present convictions of your mind. What further inquiries you may wish to make will be duly considered, by

Yours in the Lord Jesus,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 110.

TO THE SAME.

Oct. 26, 1840.

My dear christian Sisters,

Goodness and mercy be yours for ever. The Eternal has begun to show you his glory, and you may expect his kindness to remain. Whom he loves he never leaves. Why should he? He can meet with nothing new that he had not foreseen in any of his people. He knew what all his chosen would prove to be from the beginning, and though their faults were present to his view, yet he inserted their names in the register of eternal life; "whose names," said Paul, "are in the Book of Life."

There I trust your names are enrolled, and your interest is founded for ever to remain. But how, you reply, can this be truly known? It is witnessed by your heavenly birth from above. The work of the Spirit in general is to evidence your interest in the electing love of God, and the redeeming merit of Christ. The soul new-born ascends in its affections to God, and finds pleasure in his service, and nourishment in his word. The people of God then are esteemed as the excellent of the earth, and hope becomes anchored in heaven.

But you are further advanced, perhaps, in the knowledge of divine things, and can read your title clear to mansions in the skies. Be it so, still the greatest scholar is not able to cast aside the use of his alphabet. We must in some respects learn what we do not know, by the use of what we do know. The greatest man was once a child, and the wisest man once knew not that the whole is greater than a part. He that now knows most, is but very little informed as to what is to be known. If your light be increased, your

darkness must become more manifest. Knowledge produces humility, and thus endears itself by its fruits. The more knowledge of Christ is increased, the more it is desired. A healthy soul is a hungry soul, and its desires can never be quenched by being gratified. I hope you are both living above and contrary to the corrupt taste and frivolous indulgencies of a fallen world. You must be in the world, but it is your own fault if you be of it. One man can lead a horse to the water, but ten men cannot make him drink. Give not away your right of choosing your pleasures, and hold fast your birth-right of thinking for yourself. Watch your way and be awake. You profess to be going to heaven, mind you do not turn out of your appointed path thither. Observe what company you travel with, and you may pretty generally tell whether you are in the right way. You never saw a sheep wallowing in the horse-pond, nor a hen and chickens to be swimming on the river-stream! A christian has his distinct element, and there you must expect to find him. If I were a hare, said the honest Quaker, to a coursing Parson, I would hide myself from thee. Where? said the Parson. In thy study, said the Quaker! thou wouldst never find me there! A christian lives in Christ, and he may be found in his service in the house of prayer in his holy ordinances, and in moments of private devotion in his chamber: Matt. vi. 6; Isaiah xxvi. 20. "Pray without ceasing," is holy advice, and edifying practice. But in all employ, aim to keep Christ in view, as your Priest, your Pattern, and your Friend.

I must close. Peace be with you through Christ Jesus, and by his Holy Spirit. Express my kind regards to Mr. M., whom may God of his infinite mercy teach by his Holy Spirit, and sanctify his daily infirmity to the good of his undying soul, that you may meet in the next world, never more to part. Express my love to all friends, including especially your worthy minister.

I remain, yours very affectionately,

In bonds of Mercy,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 111.

TO THE SAME.

March 9, 1841.

My christian Friends,

Peace be with you through the knowledge of the everlasting gospel of our ever-living Lord and Saviour. I am still on the walls, and continue making mention of the mighty acts of our redeeming God, and carrying what light I have to guide the holy citizens, and promote their safety and general welfare. I see numbers on the highway of profession; how many of those named virgins have oil in their vessels, I am aware no man can tell. "The Lord knoweth them that are his:" and therefore he knows them that are *not* his also. "If any man have not the Spirit of Christ, he is none of his:" Rom. viii. 9. He that believeth, hath the witness in himself. The gospel is its own witness, its effects attest its origin and character, nor has it an honest man for its enemy: whoever is just towards God, is a friend to the gospel of salvation, by Jesus Christ.

The law requires but what is just; and the gospel gives what is undeservable: by the *former* the sinner is found wanting; by the *latter* his many wants are freely supplied. God claims his rights by the one, and by the other he sheds his favours—even life eternal.

You herewith receive a book that will impart instruction on many points, if you will be at the labour of perusing it carefully. I have included one for your good minister, if he will be pleased to accept it; the introductory remarks are most of them new, not having been published before. It is the third and doubtless the last edition that I shall live to publish; I am willing to hope it may be useful when my tongue is silent in death. I am well aware it is a most unpopular subject in these days, but the book of God is the only standard of *sound principles* and *right practice*, and the former will not avail us in a dying hour without the latter.

Please to express my kind regards to Mr. M., and to friends in general; I need scarcely say that Mr. B. is included. May God Almighty bless you both and lead you on in the way to endless rest, so breathes

Your willing servant in Christ,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 112.

TO THE SAME.

Jan. 17, 1844.

My christian Friends,

Some people I find are bold in their requests, as they are generous in their grants! "A note," say they, "will not satisfy *us*." Yet, it is generously added, "We shall wait patiently for your reply!" Now according to the date prefixed to this remark, my reply is rather early, for the date affixed is *Dec. 22, 1844*! We are bound however to be grateful, yea, we offer our thanks for a fine bird that we roasted and tasted with approbation in the latter end of the year 1843. How harmless are some of our errors, and error in date did not diminish the worth of your kind present: the turkey would not have tasted better had you written 1843; which no doubt was what you intended doing. Some men of genius and theological knowledge have maintained the notion *that error is innocent*, and that the worst heresy is a wicked life. Plausible things may be offered for such a creed, but *I* hesitate. Others have said, "If error be innocent, truth is of little worth." If error be innocent, then truth is not essential to perfect holiness; but Paul says, "The new man is renewed *in knowledge* after the image of Him that created him:" Col. iii. 10. Is not blindness of heart an evil? The apostle speaks of having the understanding *darkened*, being alienated from the life of God through inward *ignorance*, because of the blindness of their heart: Eph. iv. 18. Our Lord tells us that Satan abode not in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own; for he is a liar and the father of it. And because I tell you *the truth*, ye believe *me* not. Ye are of your father the devil: John viii. 44, 45. But hence it appears to me, that error cannot be innocent. A man may, though a learned doctor, tell us that Christ died for the salvation of those who never will be saved, as truly as those who are or will be saved. What then? it will be our ignorance, and our blame, if we believe him. I, said the good Shepherd, lay down my life for *my* sheep; I know *them*; and *they* sooner or later follow me as their Shepherd; for them I *must bring*; and I give unto *them* eternal life; and *they* shall *never perish*, neither shall any man or devil pluck *them* out of my hand: John x. 16, 27, 28.

They who love the Saviour, reckon him to be a *real* Saviour. And they who love their own souls will not trust them with any one who will not take due care of them. A humble man will not pretend that any doings of his can render certain what the Lord Jesus left undetermined. No, he will take the publican's station; he will rather beg for mercy at the hand of Christ, than make any pretence of rendering the work of the Saviour permanent and complete. We do not want men to commend our ability, and blow us full like bladders; but to help us to put off our impure garments, and to put on a change of raiment: Zech. iii. 3, 4; Eph. iv. 22—24.

Ministers are not to make clothes for the people, but they are ordered to bring forth the contents of the wardrobe, to shew the same as ready for use, and to assist in putting them on. This moment the thought occurs to me, that I am writing to ladies, and I trust to intelligent ones; therefore they will see that I am to be understood in a spiritual sense entirely, and in fact my office refers to soul-coverings, and therefore male and female is a distinction that has no place in the account. For I know no difference between the soul of a lady, and the soul of a gentleman. Then the ministerial office is as well fitted to help the one as the other. Nor is there any difference in the spiritual dresses appointed for them. There only is one robe of imputed obedience, there is only one way of purifying both. In the same holy fountain both Paul and Magdalen were cleansed. And when this is symbolically done, we have but one manner of doing it: as Philip of old, so we immerse both men and women: Acts viii. 12. *In Christ* there is neither male nor female, but both are one: Gal. iii. 28. I cannot say more to you now, the many claims on my few moments, my slowness, and frailty, may suggest an idea in my excuse. I am mercifully well for my time of life and late affliction.

I have a troublesome cough at times; but I have no just cause to complain, while my reasons for thankfulness exceed all expression. My household is well. Mrs. S. unites in kind regards and good wishes, on your behalf. Express my respectful remembrance to Mr. M., may he be led by the Spirit of God, to whose teaching bodily deafness can present no positive hindrance.

To your beloved minister, witness my fraternal affection,

and best desires on behalf of himself, his family and friends ; also to friends in general. And now I can only say, that I hope you will pray for the writer when you can, who remains

Yours affectionately in our Lord,
JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 113.

TO THE SAME.

March 11, 1845.

Grace, mercy, peace, and joy be with you always by all means : 2 Thess. iii. 16. I thank you for your very kind wishes on my behalf, and friendly expressions in general. These are all very well, my friend Susan ; but then you lay upon me a request of sufficient length and breadth, depth and substance, to overload my strength and capacity. What can I do with those three verses in the short time that I can afford, and within the limits of a small sheet of paper ? You should have remembered how much more easy it would have been for your worthy minister to give a brief outline of the import of the words you refer to, in a friendly conference face to face, than it is for me to break open the subject of Paul's words, in a letter. It is not possible for me to do more than convey a very brief outline of the passage. As you intimate, the apostle would not have *prayed* for those high privileges, had he considered them unattainable.

What then does he tell us he prayed for ? We may note three leading particulars. Increase in knowledge. Improvement in practice. Advancement in strength. Knowledge influences right practice ; and by practice advanced degree of strength is gained. Without the first we know not what to do : without the second we know not what we can do : without the third we reap not the benefit of our exertions.

I. Those Colossians whom he styles saints and faithful brethren, (v. 2.) had *a real* knowledge of divine truth, and had received Christ Jesus the Lord, (ii. 6) ; but the apostle was not satisfied with this, therefore he prayed for *more* knowledge. He ever teaches us to go on towards perfection : he that has received a little of the true light, is

led to hope and seek for more. The appetite is sharpened by tasting, and in spiritual things the thirst is increased by drinking. Though Paul had a good knowledge of the person and properties of his divine Master, we yet hear him crying out, and saying, "That I may know him:" Phil. iii. 10. A spiritually covetous man is never satisfied, though he owns himself edified, and is heartily thankful. Even you, in your kindness of heart, would on your esteemed friend being about to withdraw, express your thanks for his visit; but add at the same moment, I pray you come again as soon as you can? And the Lord is kind to say, "I will see you again, and your joy shall no man take from you."

2. The apostle desired that they might be *filled* with the knowledge sought: what he called being enriched in *all* knowledge: 1 Cor. i. 5. And this I pray, saith he, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge, and in all judgment, Phil. i. 9; that their holy relish for divine things might be much improved.

3. The object of the knowledge sought by him was the *will* of God: both his will of *purpose*, and his will of *precept*, and that "as a people made wise unto salvation, and unto all riches of the full assurance of understanding, to the acknowledgment of the mystery of God, and of the Father and of Christ; in whom are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge: Col. ii. 1—3. Spiritual understanding refers to the nature of things understood, called "the things of the Spirit of God," 1 Cor. ii. 14; and to the manner of understanding them, being led by the Spirit into a due conception of them: 1 Cor. ii. 12; John xvi. 13. The utmost we can attain to is only to know them in part: 1 Cor. xiii. 9—12.

4. Observe, the apostle looks to God for the knowledge he desired for his friends: "We do not cease to pray for you," said he, "and to *desire* that ye might be filled with the knowledge of *his* will." His will concerns his people, and they should be concerned to know it and to do it.

5. He afterwards speaks of *increasing* in the knowledge of God: v. 10. He had spoken of knowing his *will*, now he makes *God himself* the object of the knowledge sought. In his persons, perfections, purposes, and covenant offices, and all as revealed in the right knowledge of the Sonship, Headship, and Mediation of Christ. The knowledge of God is the highest and most important of all knowledge;

and tends to sanctify all other knowledge. This will light you through life, cheer you in death, and feast you for ever beyond it. Aim to increase.

6. You must let "your love in the Spirit" be known, (v. 8,) if you would be prayed for as were the Colossians. "For this cause we also, since the day we heard of it, do not cease to pray for you." This leads on to *an improvement in practice*.

1. That ye might walk worthy of the Lord unto all pleasing. As ye have received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk in him. Make him your Pattern whom you confess to be your Priest. He is known to be loved, and loved in being obeyed. "For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments:" 1 John v. 3. To please him in all things is what we are to aim at. Our Pattern could say, "I do always those things that please him:" John viii. 29. We cannot reach to this equality with him, but we are called to strive after conformity, Rom. xii. 1, 2; Matt. xi. 28, 29. Walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and given himself for us, in full proof of it.

2. "Being fruitful in *every* good work." Not in some right things, and disregarding others. Good work can only be done by *a good workman*, nor can he prove his right to that character without such work: James ii. 17, 18. Good works spring from a good state of heart, are produced according to a good rule, in imitation of a good pattern, and with the desire of a good end: even the glory of God, and the benefit of his cause and people. But I cannot go into this subject further; only observe that fruitfulness in good works, is to be prayed for, and is a consequent of a right knowledge of God in Christ.

3. *Advancement in spiritual strength* is connected. God's people are dependent upon him for ability to do his will. They are strengthened by his Spirit in the inward man, and are mighty through God. "They are strong in the Lord, and the power of his might:" Eph. vi. 10. Their strength is in their faith: so Abraham was strong in faith giving glory to God, by believing what he said to him. It is a glorious power that acts on the saints and enables them for glorious exploits, sheds on them a glory, and tends to the glory of God. It sustains them through all their sufferings, increases and maintains their patience, with long endurance, and raises them to a holy joyfulness. The

fruit of the Spirit is joy. Holiness and happiness are twin-children of the same parent and family. May you possess them, may I also increase in the same. This long letter has wearied me, I must lay down my pen, only first expressing my love to you all in *Christ Jesus*,

Yours in the exalted Lamb,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 114.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 30, 1845.

My kind Friends,

We received your friendly present, for which I beg to present my thanks, and pray God to reward your kindness to his feeble servant. I am glad to hear that you are all tolerably well. But by your saying, "*Mr. B. is better, I hope*," I am led to suppose he has been very ill, and that you do not feel much confidence of his being better at present. Please to express my christian affection to him. As for me, I remain much the same, and am often surprised that I am so well, when I remember my past circumstances. Nothing is too hard for the Lord. He can do everything that becometh his character: Job xlii. 2. I am, however, the subject of much infirmity, I do not say too much; but I have no redundancy of submissiveness, contentment, and patience.

You hint at my neglect of writing, but you are not aware of the many I have to write to, nor of the time such long letters occupy. Nor should you forget that many have not a Mr. B. to hear, and to confer with, as you have. It is more charity to help them that have no comforter, than them who have a constant friend at hand. Herein I rest my just excuse for not writing sooner. Besides, you are not to think yourself amongst babes that use only milk, and cannot digest strong meat. I am now slow in my work, and therefore apt to put aside what might under other circumstances be accomplished.

You speak of your trials, and of your persuasion that all things shall work together for good. It is well to know this, because it tends to quiet us under events that occur,

and directs us where to place our dependence for help in every time of need. Only to such as love God and are called according to his purpose, does the above privilege belong. But you profess to have experienced the call of God, and the consequent love for him, to which the promise is made. Thus you know that love is the offspring of love: we love him, said John, because he first loved us; not because he loved us before the world was, but before we were born of the Spirit, so as to experience a reverential love towards him. Secret love in God must become efficacious love towards us, before we can truly love him, and give up ourselves to his lovely service and faithful care. Accordingly Paul says, "The love of God is shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Ghost who is given to us." It is therefore the Spirit's office to reveal the eternal love of God the Father, and of his only begotten Son Jesus Christ our Lord. The doctrines of the gospel are as the conduit pipes through which he sheds abroad the river of God's pleasures, the streams whereof make glad the city of God: Ps. xxxvi. 8; xlv. 4; Rev. xxii. 1. Every form of truth as it is in Christ, and concerneth him, is a medium of manifesting the boundless love of the triune God.

Election, adoption, redemption, remission, justification, sanctification, perseverance, and glorification; all these are streams of sovereign love to lost sinners, and they are supplied through the main outlets, in *the Sonship, the Headship, and Mediation* of Jesus Christ. The ocean of goodness has no inlet to men in this world, but through those channels. Hence, all the receiving vessels of mercy and honour are connected with all these mediums of supply through the Holy Spirit and by faith. And thus all the vessels become filled with all the fulness of God: Rom. ix. 21—24; 2 Tim. ii. 20; John i. 14, 16; Eph. iii. 19.

Those vessels therefore are not only *receiving* vessels, but they are *containing* and *retaining* vessels, and they also become *exhibitive* and *communicative* vessels. I expect you, my friends, can attest the truth of my description, and thus you cannot live in vain. Perhaps you may have to own you are apt to leak a little at times. Now when a bucket does not hold water well, it may be needful to apply to the well-head oftener. This, experience will teach you. You may have access you know to an open river, when sometimes a well or a fountain is sealed. But the city wells of salvation

are free: Isa. xii. 2. If your thirst be burning, you will be glad to come to the waters: Isa. lv. 1. The spring-waters of the true Jerusalem rise to a head in the God-man, for the convenience of all who drink *living* water. Hence he said, "If any man thirst, let him come to me and drink:" John vii. 37. He also said, "Whosoever drinketh of the water that I shall give him, shall never thirst." He shall have plenty, be satisfied, never know the want of any other source of supply: John iv. 14. No other Christ you need. You can then sing with the poet—

"My soul is satisfied at home,
The Lord my portion is."

Remember me kindly to your friends to whom you refer,
and believe me,

Yours truly in the Lord of glory,

JOHN STEVENS.

My kind regards to Mr. M. The old year is leaving us to the cares of another. May we hope to spend the next more to God's glory, and our own profit. What think ye? What wish ye?

LETTER 115.

To Mrs. W.

Jan. 1, 1836.

Much esteemed Friend in Jesus,

It is encouraging to my spirit to learn from your friendly letter, that your mind is still edified through my feeble labours. I have long believed that my glorious Lord can work by feeble means, or *without* means if it please him. Whatever power is put forth in men or angels, it is all his own, for it is in him we live, and move, and retain and enjoy our being. This is true, both in nature and in grace; and it is well to know it, as we are thereby led to give him all the glory of our great salvation in all its parts and properties. It is he that saveth us, and not we ourselves.

A sound judgment ever tends to exalt the Lord our God in Christ Jesus, while an erroneous one leads poor sinful

mortals to think more highly of themselves than facts will maintain, and at the same time veils the glory, and withholds the just rights of God. To you it is given to know the truth as it is in Jesus. In him you behold the glory of God, and can rejoice that he is the Lord of glory. O what grace is this! To be able through the Spirit of Jehovah, to call Jesus Lord: this can no man do but by the Holy Ghost.

That Jesus is a divine person of the Eternal Essence, no works of nature nor efforts of reason could ever discover, because the union of the two infinitely distinct natures of God and man in his person, is a mystery only known by revelation, and so by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost. The honour done to our adorable Lord, is founded on the testimony of the Eternal Spirit: 1 Cor. xii. 3.

And that testimony, as contained in the Scriptures, remains unbelieved and unenjoyed till the Holy Spirit enlightens the eye of the mind to see it, and draws the will to elect and embrace it. The Spirit's work is manifest, when Christ is known, endeared, and adored. And hence we look back on our legal state, with an understanding of the nature and properties of the law of our creation, which we had never received before. Only in Jesus can justice become our guardian—only in Christ can the law be our our delight: Rom. vii. 22. The law prohibits sin, and thus shows how hateful it is in the sight of God. Jesus died for sin, and thus he shows, in a far more impressive way, the hatefulness of it; and hereby kindles a hatred to it, through his revealed love to sinners, for whom he died as a suffering victim.

The merciful acts of his priesthood lead us to inquire into his person; we see his greatness through his goodness, and behold his divinity through the mirror and merit of his humanity. We find he is laid as the foundation of hope and salvation in the sacred pages, and hence are drawn to trust in him, whom God and the godly inspired by him have trusted. He cannot be known without being adored, nor can he be honoured without being in some good degree imitated; he cannot be imitated but what sin and self must be denied.

For your kind remembrances of me, allow me to express my gratitude. I cannot feel my worthiness of the favours I receive, but when I recollect *my Lord's worth*, and the

enjoyment of *that* by my kind friends, I begin to understand how it is, that so insignificant a servant is treated so kindly. He is the mighty spring that acts on the powers of his people, and he only can make it appear that "it is more blessed to give than to receive," Acts xx. 35. A very difficult text for a covetous person to admire and exemplify.

I have not now time for adding more than the expression of my best wishes for you and yours; that the unction of the Holy One may rest in plenitude upon you; that your soul may grow up into Christ in all things; that you may live much above, and walk daily in the comforts of the Holy Ghost; that you may continue to be benefited by the ministry of

Your obliged and affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 116.

TO THE SAME.

May 17, 1837.

My much esteemed Friend,

It has been said, that there is a self in every state, and I must own it is pleasing to see my friends about me, and to meet them in the openings of the true temple of the Godhead.

"Is he a temple? I adore
Th' indwelling majesty and power;
And still to this most holy place,
Whene'er I pray, I turn my face."

This chosen seat of divine abode, is the meeting-house of ransomed minds, and the place of worship to all the royal priesthood and holy nation of our covenant God. Here, from all parts of his unmeasured dominion, laden with offerings, his tribes assemble. They have a dear-bought liberty of entrance into the holiest of all, this inner apartment of incomprehensible majesty, where the uncreated glory of the self-existent Three in One, shines to endless day, through divers intervening mediums upon the new-

made heirs of heaven, before they arrive at the fullest view of this interior dwelling of the great Eternal.

The Holy Spirit proceedeth thence to show the celestial family of our God their way into the celestial *sanctum sanctorum*. He opens the mystery thereof in this world to the eye of the mind, and makes known the temple, the altar, and the Priest, in the same object. In the Man dwells the God, and that so as to be *one with the Man*. This idea of oneness shows the great distinction between God's being in the Man, and his being in the bush, and in the cloud and temple. Though God was in those several mediums, yet none of them was God, neither of them was one person with the divine resident. But the Word was God, in the divine nature of our Lord's person, while the Word was *with* God, touching the begotten nature of our Lord's person. There was *THAT* which the apostles heard, saw, and handled of the word of life; which life was with the Father, and was afterwards manifested unto them: 1 John i. 12.

How far above all human expectation is this mystery of wisdom, which from the beginning of the world has been hid in God! Whoever imagined that there was an only Son in heaven, when Adam stood in Eden an only son on earth? The shadow falling on earth from the substance in heaven. The manifestation of the Son of the upper Paradise, was occasioned by the manifestation of the mutability of the son of the lower Eden. Sin's birth occasioned the Saviour's birth. He was manifested to take away our sins, and to destroy the works of the devil: 1 John iii. 5—8.

Now the conqueror is ascended where he was before, and is living to give *knowledge* of his dying and rising in his powerful reign. This knowledge is our light, my friend, in this vale of gloom, and of distance. It is a holy and heavenly light beaming on the mind, affecting the heart, and transforming the whole soul into the image of God in the glory-man.

A wonderful scheme of grace, indeed; this is that Holy One, of whose fulness of unction all the holy ones are made partakers, and through which divine influence they come to know all things: 1 John ii. 20—27. The power of heaven is felt in knowledge, and the will of man converted in the force of evidence and the excellence of goodness. Christ appears the greatest good, and there the enlightened

choice falls ; and through this opened treasury of all spiritual blessings joy abounds. Here is ground of peace and contentment, and hereby our souls are led to moderate their wishes and cares about this present world. Heaven seems enough, the Head over all things enough, the procurements of his mediation are reckoned sufficient to maintain our lives, and uphold our joys for ever and ever.

The worth of eyes is connected with objects for vision, and light in which they become visible, and are perceived to advantage. So is faith valuable on account of its bright and beneficial object ; a precious object renders the act of seeing and enjoying it valuable. Faith draws all its consequence from its object, end, and use. What endears Christ is of worth to us, but faith endears him ; therefore it is called precious faith, and is part of our valuables.

I must close my few remarks with wishing you a rich experience of facts in spiritual feelings. Examine your wardrobe daily, keep the mantle of mercy, which is the best robe, near at hand ; you are to sing praise before the King in it, hence it is named the garment of praise, and is an excellent substitute for the spirit of heaviness, and gives a beauty that no painting can equal, and is widely distinguished from sackcloth and ashes. In short, it will be worn when the days of our mourning are ended. It is always accompanied with a family ring on the hand, and beautiful shoes on the feet, and is a pledge of a forgiving Father's love : Luke xv. 22 ; Song vii. 1 ; Eph. vi. 15. The holy anointing is connected ; you have it from the true tabernacle.

May it be yours abundantly through the Anointed, is the prayer of

Your Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 117.

To MR. W. C.

Oct. 20, 1846.

My christian Friend,

Hearing from you leads me back forty years, calls up to remembrance many names of friends, now no more,

whose faces we used to see with some pleasure, whose voices we used to hear in our different friendly meetings, and in the public assemblies of God's worshipping people. They were, several of them, well stricken in years, when we were young and in the vigour of our days. Now we are become old, and shortly *must* put off these our earthly tabernacles, as our friends have done before us. It is a solemn change, because it is a final one. There is a passage through Jordan, but there is no back passage—no return to these shores of time. It is the privilege of the accepted sons and daughters of God not to wish for any return. We are willing rather to be absent from the body and to be present with the Lord. Wherefore we labour, that whether present or absent we may be accepted of him, (2 Cor. v. 8, 9,) that is, *well pleasing* in his sight, as to our spirit and conduct, in the closet, in the family, in the church, and before the world. Now this is happily the case when God causeth us to triumph in Christ, and maketh manifest *the savour* of his knowledge *by us* in every place; not only true and chiefly meant of preachers, but it is applicable to hearers also. God has made his chosen accepted in the beloved, Eph. i. 6; this refers to their adoption and justification in Christ, who is the perfection and the perfecter of all the family of God in heaven and on earth. And it is on this very ground that they are induced and enabled to labour that their conversation may be blameless, and accepted of God through faith in Christ Jesus. Their completeness *in* Christ promotes in them a serious concern that they may be complete through and *for* Christ. Justification by grace is the true foundation of the powerful reign of grace in the souls of the justified. What is done in Christ *for* them is wrought *through* Christ *in* them by the eternal Spirit, who shews the things of Christ *to* them. This you know, sir, is the old doctrine we used to profess in years far gone. And this is the theme which true faith appropriates, and the divine Comforter is connected with officially by the eternal settlements of the sacred Three in One. We have lived to see an astonishing change in the professing world. It is indeed the wonderful age. Religion, such as it is, is almost everywhere talked of and applauded; and being ingeniously mixed up with politics, it is nominated in all assemblies without creating offence. The constant assertion of universal redemption in public

orations harmonizes all classes, and the offence of the cross has pretty well passed away. The devil is hustling the world and the church together so dexterously that many see little difference between them. Many seem to be uncommonly concerned to alleviate the condition of poor, profligate mortals, who have not a word to say for the person and character of our adorable Saviour. His doctrines are little heard of in our congregations, and if named it is frequently to censure them and to cast them into an Arminian shape. But enough of this—let us look to our goings; we are at the bank of the river, and must leave our native land soon. Let us see that our garments are white, and that our heads are duly anointed, that we are ready for our departure. I do not count of taking any packed-up portmanteau, as has at times been talked of, for my imagination is, that I shall have all my clothes on, of course I mean my best. Besides, I am expecting to be arrayed in heavenly white, if I be so happy as to arrive in the city of which we read that the glory of God enlightens it, and the Lamb is the light thereof. It doth not appear fully what we shall be, only this we are given to know, that when he shall appear we shall be like him, for we shall see him as *he is*. This is enough, but less would not suffice us. You have the *earnest*, I expect; if so, all the estate will follow in due order. Express my christian love to Mrs. C. I expect she sails in the same vessel; also to Mr. and Mrs. S.; in short, to Mr. P. and *all* friends.

I am as usual, very feeble to what I once was; but I must come *to* the dust in order to get away *from* dust! I thank you for a welcome under your roof, and for all kindness,

Remaining yours still in Ours for ever,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 118.

TO MISS COTTEN.

Sept. 11, 1835.

My dear, tried Sister in the Lord of life and glory,

The good will of him that dwelt in the bush be with you. In all his people's afflictions, he is afflicted; that is,

he concerns himself with them, and esteems them as the afflictions of his members. We are even allowed to reckon our afflictions are his, and our enemies are his enemies, and our friends are his friends. For he counts that what is done to or for his followers, is done to or for himself: Matt. xxv. 40. In agreement herewith the famous apostle of us Gentiles says, "I rejoice in my sufferings for you Colossian saints, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my flesh for his body's sake, which is the church." You see how he calls his afflictions the afflictions of Christ. This was giving them a connection and name that would tend to make them more bearable, and to spiritualize his mind under them. So, though he was imprisoned by Nero the Roman emperor, yet he glories in styling himself *the prisoner of the LORD*: Eph. iv. 1.

Accordingly we hear him declaring that the Lord would deliver him from every evil work, and would preserve him unto his heavenly kingdom; "*to whom*," he exclaims, "be glory for ever and ever. Amen." We may hence observe, how he received his afflictions as from God his Saviour; and likewise he ascribed his every deliverance to the same divine hand. Thus you, my friend, have learned to do, I doubt not. And though your affliction is widely different from that of the tried apostle, it is nevertheless allotted by the same wise God, and on his hand alone can you rely for patience and strength to endure to the end, and for final deliverance when the day of your salvation shall have arrived.

As our sorrows are measured by time, so they must be continually going hence, for they are not allowed to return so as to increase the time of sorrow. Every passing day has its events, nor can those of one day be transferred to another, for time is always going forward, and finishes his business as he proceeds; nor do we ever meet him retracing his steps, or going over his ground a second time. While our health and strength are thus ever going, we have the happiness to know our sorrows and cares are also going at the same time.

Your case has been a long infirmity, and the Lord's mercy has *endured* and upheld you in all the wearisome days and nights which have passed over you. This is to you a strong witness both for the faithfulness of God to his word, and also for the reality of your interest in his favour. His continued goodness can never fail in future; what he has

been he will be, and whatsoever he hath spoken must surely come to pass.

He is still saying, When thou passest through the waters I am with thee, and through the rivers they shall not overflow thee; for I am thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour. It is he who daily says to his tried and tempted worshippers, "Fear not, thou worm Jacob, I will help thee:" Isa. xli. 14. This God, we exclaim, is our God, and that for ever and ever, and he will be our guide unto death. He is our strength in time of trouble. He still says, "O Israel, thou shalt not be forgotten of me:" Isa. xlv. 21. Why saith he these things? Is it not that we may take hold of his strength, and rely upon his care? It is his will that his hopeful servants should have strong consolation, and he has given them his word and his oath for that desirable end, and has styled himself the God of consolation; yea, the God of *all* comfort. Now, though this is his character always, yet his people do not always experience it to be so to them, in their being always filled with all joy and peace in believing. They have always the same God, but not always the same enjoyment of his love and mercy. Yet their foundation is the same through all changes. The sun clouded is as bright in itself as when no cloud conceals its splendour. He who suffered for us is Jesus, ever the same, and when his virtues and merits do not affect us they are still influential for us towards God, as our Lawgiver and Judge.

You are painfully separated from the public means of grace and refreshment, but the fulness that filleth all in all is yours. And your faith is given you to live thereon, until your days in the low-land are finished. Frequent the seat of mercy—repeat your needs—keep your hand of faith on the testimony—aim to be both humble and bold—remember the weight of the name by which you plead—ask largely—offer constant thanks for your many favours—let not continued trial impede you in this. Believe me

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 119.

TO THE SAME.

Jan. 12, 1836.

My afflicted Sister,

I am glad to find that though you are still in the water, your head is above it, that you are not prevented from speaking to his praise who has spoken for your comfort; saying, "Fear not; for I have redeemed thee, I have called thee; thou art mine. When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee:" *why not?* "for I am Jehovah thy covenant God, thy Saviour:" Isa. xliii. 2.

You may here remark that the omniscient eye of God sees how liable you are *to fear*. He therefore speaks to restrain it, and says, *Fear not*. This he will not say to the unbelieving and disobedient; he has a very different word for them: Rev. xxi. 8. But to his afflicted he especially speaks kindly; their circumstances require it, and his tender mercy cries, *Fear not*. This shows that his saints have no real cause for fear, and that they have much reason for confidence and quiet hope: Lam. iii. 24—26. He gives his reasons why you should not fear in the same context.

First, He says, because I am the Lord thy God, thy Holy One, thy Saviour. Now this includes every good; for if he be thy God and thy Saviour, then all he is and has, is for thy benefit; all he says and does, is for thy use and comfort. He thus proclaims himself the shield and portion of his feeble and afflicted saints.

Second, He lays claim to you; saying, *Thou art mine*. And the well-taught apostle Paul says, "All things are yours, for ye are Christ's, and Christ is God's. This claim shews *his delight* in thee: *Thou art mine*; thou *shalt* be mine in that day when I make up my jewels. *Thou art mine* to be and suffer for my honour a while in the vale of tribulation, *and mine* to *exemplify* my merciful aid in thy patient endurances, and thy final deliverance. Thou art mine as millions are not, nor ever will be. Mine in Christ, my well-beloved Son, and for his lasting honour and praise: 2^d Thess. i. 12.

Third, He says, "I have redeemed thee." This at once shews that you were a captive sold under sin, and by the law of creation exposed to merited punishment. Yet it also shews that you shall never be left to suffer that to which you were liable; for he has redeemed you from the curse of the law in the person of the Son, whose love is shewn in giving himself for his people to redeem them from all iniquity: Titus ii. 14. He loved me, said the chief of sinners; he gave himself for me. He loved the church, said he, and gave himself for it, that he might sanctify and cleanse it, and finally present it to himself a glorious church. By this redemption, divine justice is made your guardian, and the Holy Spirit your heavenly Tutor. He says, "I have called thee by thy name." This is a *sure proof* of his having become your God, and his having redeemed you, and considered you *his own*. His calling is effectual and distinguishing, and is attended with results which witness his love and power. He shews hereby how fully he knows us, *who* we are, *what* we are, *where* we are, *what our names* are, and *what our thoughts* are, both of ourselves and of him. His voice is a voice of influence, by which he calls his chosen to consider their own character, and his also. He causes them to hearken to his word, and comply with his will, and seek his favour, and follow his steps, as exemplified in the life of Christ and his apostles. The language of his calling grace is, *Thou art mine*. He calls you to hear what he says, see what he does, do what he commands, and enjoy what he gives. He especially calls you to observe his Son, and to know him, and love him, and to remember that he is well pleased in him: Matt. iii. 17; 2 Pet. i. 17, 18. Thus we have three grounds why the saint should not entertain a servile fear.

Fourth, He also represses fear, by saying over and over again, *I am* with thee, *I will* be with thee. I will fear no evil, said David, for thou art with me. And it is to be observed that he engages to be with thee where his presence is so much needed; that is, in the deep waters and alarming fires. He neither suffers the former to drown, nor the latter to consume. He does not promise we shall have no pain, but that he will be with us in our sorrows. He can make both the floods and the fires to purify; and take occasion to shew us more impressively his ability and faithfulness through them. He not only says he can uphold

and deliver, and that he will deliver; but he does uphold, and does deliver. "This poor man cried," said David, "and the Lord heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles." "I was brought low," said he, "and he helped me."

To Israel, he said, I gave Ethiopia, Egypt, and Seba for thy ransom; but, my friend, he hath given more for thy ransom; he hath given himself for thee; and hereby has made thee honourable, and will finally crown thee with glory and honour. Long is thy affliction, in one view of it; but when thy crown of *endless* life is reviewed, what a moment is all this life of griefs and groans! It is your great mercy to have your mind kept up in attention to the things of God; the Lord the Spirit abundantly bless you with all joy and peace in believing, and seal your soul to the looked-for day of final redemption. You do not worship a blind or fickle deity; but a wise, holy, gracious, faithful, and Almighty God: you worship him as a God, whose character you admire, whose oracles you believe, whose people you esteem, whose presence you desire, and on whose care you depend. May you continue herein to the last, and when this natural body is once put off, it will signify to you no more for ever how much trouble it occasioned you. Pray for patience, hope, and gratitude. Be looking unto Jesus for all, and believe me

Your affectionate pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 120.

TO THE SAME.

Feb. 1, 1837.

My afflicted Friend,

Your interest with God in and by Christ is older, and will last longer than your affliction, as God had loved you before he called you into being; so he has let you know this since you came into being; nor can any sorrows of time deny the eternity of his love. Having been laid aside by indisposition of body a few days, and finding that disease was very prevalent all around, I was led on my

return to my work, to offer some thoughts on Paul's words, 1 Thess. iii. 3: "That no man should be moved by these afflictions; for yourselves know that ye are appointed thereunto." Some appropriate thoughts I hope were expressed, suited to the circumstances of the people in a day of very general suffering.

The words were addressed to the church then at Thessalonica, in God the Father, and the Lord Jesus Christ; and by afflictions, no doubt Paul meant persecutions for Christ's sake. The Lord's saints were called to evidence their love, and to exemplify their religion, through most trying visitations, to shew what power his divine grace had upon their hearts. God was glorified by their faith and patience: 1 Pet. iv. 12—14; Rev. xiv. 12. The patient sufferings of his people glorify him before the world.

God appoints his people to their afflictions, is contained in the apostle's words; and this is not only true of their persecutions, but of all the sufferings of this mortal life: yes, my sister, it is true of your long-continued infirmity. Your heavenly Father had a fore-knowledge of all your infirmities, and had pre-ordained them all before you came to any sense of them. So that you may say with the tried Psalmist, "My times are in thy hand." This is no small reason for submission and gratitude, adoration and contentment, that the wise, the mighty, and the all-merciful God of all grace has taken our affairs into his *own* hand.

He not only appoints all his chosen to obtain salvation through Jesus Christ, as their Head and Redeemer; but he appoints all the means through which that salvation shall be finally attained to. Through many afflictions the church is to get safe to glory at last.

He appoints some to bear afflictions, and others to escape it in many instances. What a dreary hospital must this world be, if all were afflicted. But some are reserved to carry on the business of life, while others are incapacitated: how evidently wise and merciful is this! He appoints to some to suffer at one time, and some at another time; some to suffer in one way, and some in another way. And herein we see his sovereign will and almighty power to do as it pleases him, in the armies of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. He appoints his saints who trust in him, to go not only *into*, but *through* them. The

Egyptians went into the sea, but Israel also went out on the other side. I will bring, saith the Lord, the third part through the fire. The just shall come out of trouble. But he appoints some to extraordinary afflictions, as we see in the case of Job; and we see the same in many instances in our own times. The apostle, however, makes the divine appointment a ground for stability: *no man should be moved by these afflictions*: not shaken as to his faith and hope; not disturbed or discouraged by them, as they are appointed for holy ends; and his people are appointed to them, and are therefore fitted to bear them. For what he appoints us to do or suffer, he will mercifully help us to go through. Now if the Thessalonians should not be moved, who suffered *for* religion, surely we should not be moved from our profession of hope, who only suffer *with* religion. The enemy tries to move us, by insinuating that our religion is useless; for, saith he, you could but be afflicted had you no religion. Then he will pretend God cannot love you, because he permits you to continue afflicted when he could deliver you if he would. He argues as if we suffered loss *by* Christ, as well as *for* him, which is not true: the saints will be gainers at last. The Lord help you, by his Spirit, that you may continue unmoved from your hope and dependence, and be kept waiting for the deliverance promised to all that believe his word.

Your affectionate pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 121.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 16, 1839.

My afflicted and ransomed Sister,

Grace, mercy, and peace be multiplied, through the knowledge of Christ Jesus our Lord. Solomon says, "In the day of adversity consider:" Eccles. vii. 14. Here is *a day supposed, and consideration required in it*. The advice is given according to the day, and our temper is required to be according to our day. Hence it is said, "In the day of prosperity *be joyful*, and in the day of adversity *consider*."

What are we to consider? 1. That man has chosen the evil of sinning; that God has chosen the evil of suffering for the correction of the evil of sin. Suffering came in by sinning, and by it we are constantly reminded of the original offence, as the root of all our sorrows. May your long-continued affliction be made to increase your hatred to sin, that alluring poison of mankind. It is easier to become *convinced* of sin than to *hate* it. Yet the latter is our cure, and the effect of a holy principle of love to God and concern for his glory. 2. To consider is to look well into the causes and connection of things, with their tendencies for our good and his glory. Aim to make all things lead to useful knowledge and holy ends. 3. Distinguish between what *must* constitute, and what *may* accompany the christian character. Adversity is not *essential* to it, nor is it any *denial* of it, nor is it any *evidence* of it. A man may be gracious without afflictions; in heaven it is not known. He may be grievously afflicted, and not know God; but he may be a perfect and upright man, and yet be afflicted beyond common; this was Job's case; his friends erred in supposing the contrary. We can neither learn divine love nor hatred by these external circumstances. 4. Consider who is your best Friend, and that he has chosen your lot for you, and that you are called to receive it as at his hand: Psa. xlvii. 4; 1 Thess. iii. 3; Job ii. 10. Remember what your Lord has done in past times, and what mercies yet remain: Gen. xlix. 15. Again—5. Consider by what your adversity is regulated, as to time, manner, and measure, even by divinely sovereign, infinitely wise, and constantly good *will of God*. Every trial has its time to come and remain. It is *but a day* of adversity, it is restricted to the present time, Rom. viii. 18, which is less than a moment to eternity. And we have some enjoyment mingled with our griefs, though hope and patience be often straitened. 6. Consider with whom you are associated as your forerunners in like sufferings and adversity, even with Christ himself: Rom. viii. 17, 18; 2 Tim. ii. 11—13; Heb. iv. 15; xiii. 3; and with patriarchs, prophets, apostles, and the whole family now in heaven, who went thither out of great tribulations: Rev. vii. 14; Heb. xi. 32—40; Acts xiv. 22. 7. Consider where your *help* is laid, and what it is, and how it is, and how it is ensured and imparted to you. Consider, for this purpose, your gospel interest and spiritual

knowledge, and their fitness to sustain the mind in adversity, and to make affliction light: 2 Cor. iv. 17, 18; xii. 9; Phil. iv. 13. Your help is in your *Head*, and is derived by faith through praying in the Holy Ghost. 8. Consider how *useless* it is, and also *dangerous*, to disquiet yourself about what can neither be hindered nor altered. Rather say with Eli, "It is the Lord, let him do as seemeth him good." 9. Consider what is promised to you in the day of adversity, viz., the presence of God, Isa. xli. 10; Heb. xiii. 5, 6; strength as your day, 1 Cor. x. 13; that you shall be delivered, Psal. xxxiv. 19; shall come out of trouble, Prov. xii. 13; Psal. l. 15; xci. 14, 15; cxxxviii. 7. 10. Consider what is required of you in a day of adversity,—submission to the divine will, reliance on the divine care, urgent prayer for divine aid, and hope to the end of the day. 11. Consider what awaits you after the day is ended, a day of endless rest, perfect holiness and joy, with Christ and all his friends. There sighing and mourning are unknown, tears are wiped away, and there is no more pain: Rev. xxi. 4. Accept this token of love for Christ's sake, from

Your Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 122.

TO THE SAME.

April 30, 1843.

My afflicted Friend,

I thank you for your sympathy and good wishes, and am favoured to inform you that I am much relieved from my infirmity at present, and trust it may remain. I have passed through a scene of deep distress, and once expected my days were about ended. But now it appears as if I might be a little while engaged in my official work before I leave the land of mortal existence. I fear to promise myself any such thing, but all depends on the will of him whom we are born to serve, and die to worship in higher strains of holy gratitude and praise.

Can we but rest in *his* will, *our own* will not offer us much trouble. Oft in my sorrowful moments have I cited our great Master's words: "The spirit indeed is willing, but

the flesh is weak : Matt. xxvi. 41. This evinced his kindness towards his weak disciples, and should encourage us !

I have been preserved in unshaken persuasion of what I have so many years published to others. The truths of free and distinguishing grace have yielded me satisfaction and support, when constrained to look upon the solemnities of the grave, and the approximation of an eternal state. My *weakness* never appeared more conspicuous and entire, nor my *strength* more sufficient and satisfactory, than when the earth seemed receding, and the portals of eternity summoned my serious attention. To live was Christ, to die was Christ, to go hence was Christ, to receive the end of my faith was Christ, to obtain answer to my prayers was Christ. My covering garments are Christ, my cleansing fountain is Christ, my happiness is Christ, and my way to endless glory is Christ. He is my wealth, my shield, my pattern, my advocate, my everlasting all.

On him I trust, for him I plead, about him I talk, his acts I commend, his friends I esteem : and yet, *not I*, but his influence enables and actuates me. If he will but *strengthen me*, I shall do all things, bear all things, and all things will appear right in my eyes, that he does. *My* works will be *required*, but they will not be *trusted* : they will be good in *their* place, but must not be in *his* place. I find prayer frequently, and sometimes in the night season, very blessed employ. I rise up in my bed and speak for fifteen or twenty minutes to my Father in heaven, at times when I am awake, and vent my sighs and cries in Immanuel's name.

I am stayed on the Holy One, whose unction gives knowledge of all things needful to the saints in life and death. This is your point, but I find a want of vigour at times, and though I have fire, I have no flame until it is stirred up again. Perhaps you experience a little of the same suspension. I am hoping to be at our ordinance on Lord's-day, next month. Peace be with you, my tried friend, always.

From your tried and affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 123.

To Miss G.

Sept. 2, 1842.

My christian Friend,

Though I am straitened for time and can write but a few lines, yet, when I remember your kind letter has been lying by me since the 5th of August, and especially as I learn through your good brother the solemn visitation which has so lately occurred in your family, I am the more induced to transmit a few thoughts. Whatever indifference we may have experienced respecting the visitation of death, when it enters our own family, and dissolves the dearest relative ties, we are constrained to feel the stroke. This is wisely ordered by our Father in heaven, to arouse our torpid minds to serious thought upon *our* prospects, and upon the holy word of God, which lifts the veil of the unseen world, so as to afford us a glimpse of eternal things.

When our friends in Christ are taken out of this trying world, and from all possibility of sinning again, it demands our solemn acquiescence, and adoring gratitude that we have hope of following them into the same immortal rest and joy. When we can entertain but a fluctuating hope for departed friends, we are called to be submissive before the eternal God, and stay our anxious minds on the character of him in whose hands is the destiny of every living creature. When his providence seems hard to read, his promises remain plain, and to them we may turn for help in every time of need.

In afflictive visitations, there is some real support derived by confidence in the divine character, by reconciliation to the divine will, by reliance on the divine aid, and by a humble remembrance of the principle and end from which the Lord acts, in his dealings with his believing people. He ever acts in love towards them, even when they are sharply tried; and his end is the glory of his own character, and the final welfare of all his tried and suffering people. This should induce us to trust him when we cannot trace his steps. The Judge of all the earth cannot but do right. Let us humbly commit our affairs to his hand, and rest our weariable souls on his almighty arm, and his fatherly care: 1 Peter v. 6, 7.

I remember you are weak in body, but this is no hinderance to your being strong in faith, giving glory to God. The spiritual life of the saint is not rooted in himself only, but also in Christ, who is the life of all the just; you have a life of pardon, of acceptance, and of holiness hid with Christ in God: Col. iii. 3, 4. And you are therefore to live because he liveth: John xiv. 19. "I live," said Paul, "by the faith of the Son of God, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me; who loved me and gave himself for me:" Gal. ii. 20; Rom. xiv. 7, 8, 9.

I hope you are upheld by your merciful God and Saviour; to him I would ever refer you, as the supreme aid in every dreary way. Accept these lines as a token of remembrance from the hand of

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 124.

TO THE SAME.

Feb. 27, 1844.

My kind Friend,

I was much obliged by your friendly letter, and tender you my thanks for your truly sympathetic remembrance of me. Your good wishes on my behalf are realized; the Lord has sustained me, and I do hope after a storm we enjoy a serene aspect.

The Lord has often made our distressing days introductory to greater enjoyment of his forgiving goodness. He hereby calls us closer to himself, and while tribulation worketh patience, it may well be our glory: Rom. v. 3. What calls us nearer to God, may be trying, but must be useful. We cannot commune with him without benefit, for in his favour is life. And in his light, as given through his word and Spirit, we see the light of heaven itself. The thankfulness you express for little, shews that you are on the way to obtain more, especially as you have *a great desire for more*.

The Lord never kindles great desire for spiritual things in vain; where he gives the thirst, he sooner or later gives the living waters. Strong desire is a mark of health of

soul: David says, Delight thyself in the Lord, and he shall give thee *the desires of thine heart*. Commit thy way unto the Lord: trust also in him, and he shall bring it to pass. There is none like the God of Jeshurun, who rideth upon the heaven in thy help, and in his excellency on the sky. This eternal God is thy refuge, and underneath are the everlasting arms. What a protector is he! Who can harm whom he will shelter? He is our dwelling-place and our merciful purveyor; he marks our wants, and engages to supply our needs according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus.

It is an honour to be a pensioner on his bounty, and even a beggar at his door. God's beggars are better off than Satan's princes. Holiness yields a happiness of higher worth, than can be realized by any source the world can boast of. Godliness has the promise of the life that now is, and also of that which is to come. God cares for soul and body, and will bring them both to glory. In this world tribulation may come upon us, our comforts may be few, our crosses may be heavy; but every day shortens their duration, and God's favour makes them bearable.

I trust the Lord will continue to shield you through this vale of tears; he will not suffer you to be tempted beyond your given ability to bear. I hope you will not be constrained to leave us, through any change in your brother's relation, as to what is, I suppose, designed, if not consummated. But all things are of God; you are his care, and he will be your comfort, through all the vicissitudes of life. With best wishes on your behalf, I remain,

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

My kind regards to your good brother in the Lord.
 "He worketh all things after the counsel of his own will."

"And by His saints it stands confess'd,
 That what *he* does is ever best."

LETTER 125.

TO THE SAME.

May 7, 1845.

My esteemed christian Friend,

I was glad to find that you were well in body and well

disposed in mind. God almighty keep you in his fear all your days, and grant you the light of his countenance through all the subsequent stages of your pilgrimage. I continue much the same as when you last saw me, and am endeavouring to give knowledge of salvation by the remission of sins, through that blood which differs from all other blood, as does *he* whose it is, from every other person existing. There is none like him, there is no love like his, there is no work like his, there is no name but his whereby we must be saved. Of him we cannot say too much in commendation, and as to blame we can say nothing, until we turn our eyes from him to ourselves.

There are wonders in the world, but he is the greatest of them all. No where else do we find such extremes meet; only in him do we see such power and weakness joined. Man is himself a complex being, consisting of matter and spirit, mortal and immortal, visibility and invisibility, animal and rational. But though these are bold contrasts, they are small affairs when the oneness of God and man is compared. Here in one complex personal agent we find united, self-existence and derived existence, eternity and time, independence and real dependence, cause and effect; what then may we not expect from the friendship of such a distinguished agent? What work is too great for him to accomplish? His incapacity is his eternal honour. He cannot lie, he cannot deceive, he cannot deny himself, he cannot love sin, he cannot punish the innocent; but then all this redounds to his honour and praise, such weakness only proves his divine ability. If you suppose such a person to perform an obedience by voluntary compact, what must we expect that obedience will be? It must be answerable to the properties of its Author. *Hence* we have what is called the righteousness of God: 2 Cor. v. 21. In this extraordinary production the whole elect world is clad and acquitted, is accepted and glorified. In this you are professing to confide as your best mantle, and the only one in which you can venture to appear in the presence of a holy and eternal God. It cancels all blemishes, and sheds a dignity on the wearer. I, said David, will make mention of thy righteousness, and of thine only. It makes the sinner just, and justifies his Judge in his justifying him: Rom. iii. 25, 26.

Hence arises a full satisfaction in the believer's conscience

in being thus justified: seeing the ground of his discharge is so highly worthy of the benefit granted him. He sees Christ's meritorious obedience has more worth to acquire his discharge than his own offences have guilt in them to bring his condemnation. This is that fulfilment of law which faith appropriates for an honourable justification. By this faith we live, and by it our Lord is endeared, and our souls are relieved: 1 Pet. ii. 7. Paul said, "The life which I live in the flesh, I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." Is not this your faith also?

From the dignity of our Saviour's person we have the merit of his blood, which Peter calls "the precious blood of Christ." Its internal value consists of its being the blood of his person, but its saving merit is through its being shed according to covenant. It is precious in the sight of God, and in the esteem of his regenerate and believing people. It removes the greatest evils, and procures the greatest blessings. It is the seal of the covenant, and the acquiring price of all its promised benefits: Matt. xxvi. 28; Heb. xiii. 20. It is a cleansing fountain, Zech. xiii. 1; 1 John i. 7—9; it is shed to cleanse from all manner of sin and blasphemy. With it many nations are sprinkled, Isa. lii. 15; that is, many of the people of those nations, for the Lord did not sprinkle *whole* nations; though he sprinkled many of all nations. The value of Christ's blood is known by its application to the heart by faith, by which sin becomes hateful, self abased, Christ is prized, hope is raised, comfort is increased, and grace is felt. Be looking daily to Jesus as the Author and Perfecter of your faith. You know the way to the city, aim to walk in it. Cast your care upon the Lord. Pray frequently and watch thereunto. Be of good cheer, is the daily language of your Lord. Expect his help, and stay upon his word. We are as usual at Salem. With best wishes for your temporal and spiritual welfare, I remain

Your affectionate Pastor,

In Jesus' name,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 126.

TO THE SAME.

June 4, 1846.

My christian Friend,

I am glad to find you are in health, and seeking after the mind of God in his word. You will frequently find professors more apt to busy themselves about curious questions, and select passages of holy writ, than in giving any satisfactory evidence that they really have a serious case of their own. If they set any value on their own souls, they will hardly be forward to prove the certainty of their own damnation. For if the death of Christ leaves men to perish, what ground can they have of salvation? If a weak brother may *eternally* perish for whom Christ died, through the conduct of one who is stronger than he, how precarious must his state be? How is salvation of the Lord, if our neighbour has it in his power to destroy our interest in Christ's death? You, my friend, I am sure, know better far than for a moment to suppose that what any professor of religion may eat or drink can by any means deprive you of your interest in the saving merits of Christ's death. Though a man may bring destruction on himself, if not prevented by sovereign grace, yet he has no power to bring eternal ruin on another person. I have used these words in my late piece, entitled, *Words of Truth arranged*, on the 79th page,—“They can never eternally perish for whom Christ died, for he died for none but his sheep, and to all them he gives eternal life, John x. 27, 28. Nor can it be allowed that any man has the power of destroying the soul of his fellow-sinner. He may destroy his peace in a great degree, and waste his comforts, and occasion a decay in the exercise of his graces, but over *his interest* in the death of Christ he can have no power. ‘He that is weak in the faith’ may be stumbled and made weaker, by the imprudent use his brother may make of his knowledge in his sight; but his *life* is safely hid with Christ in God.” (Col. iii. 3, 4.) After all, this trial of the weak is not very likely to occur with us as in the apostle's day. The reference is to some who better knew than others did the liberty which the gospel gave to its disciples in regard to meats, both as to Judaism and to heathen customs. Every christian, however, is required to act charitably towards his

christian brother, and not to stumble the weak in the faith, either as to doctrine or the grace of faith. To encourage the feeble-minded by advising and instructing them in the mysteries of the kingdom of God.

I hope the ignorance and contrariness of the professors around you may prove a benefit to you, by occasioning you to mark your want of more skill in the doctrine, and by exciting you to ardent prayer for light and strength to hold on your way, and make a straight path for your feet.

You seem to have met with some man who conceived God had sent salvation to all. How is it, then, that so many millions remain, as they have done for ages past, in a state of heathenism? What have the Chinese known of salvation? or the wild Arabs and Africans? The *doctrine* is sent among many in civilized nations, yea, in this nation; but the *salvation* of the doctrine is sent to a comparatively small number. Of what value is a spurious charity? He must be blind indeed who does not see that most men perish in their sins, amid all the talk of parties. The election obtain salvation, and they only. They are ever talking about Christ's having redeemed all men. I inquire, from what were they redeemed who are in perdition? Surely not from their sins, for they remain upon them. Not from the punishment of sin, for that is what they are suffering. Not from the love of sin, for that they still retain. Not from the power of Satan, for that they are more under than ever. Not from the curse of the law, for that is what they constantly endure.

Whom God loves he never leaves,—whom he enrolls he never erases,—whom he pardons he corrects, but never punishes,—whom he confesses he never rejects or denies. Hold fast that which thou hast received, that no man take thy crown. We are in peace at Salem, though need reviving much. I continue in my standing, though my age is advancing—am just ending my seventieth year. My household is well. Keep your eye on your great High-priest, and on his work. May the Holy Spirit strengthen your heart, and keep your soul alive. Peace be with you through finished redemption.

Your affectionate Pastor, for Christ's sake,

JOHN STEVENS.

Mrs. S. unites in kind regards and best wishes.

LETTER 127.

To Miss C.

Huntley Street, March 9, 1830.

My dear young Friend,

I cannot but feel interested on your behalf; and happy should I esteem myself, could I by any means and in any measure, at all contribute to your mental cheerfulness and spiritual consolation, as an instrument in the hands of the living God. He is a truly gracious and merciful God, and abideth faithful to his covenant promises for ever, and perpetually remembers we are but dust. It is from his kind teaching we came inwardly and usefully to know how frail and how blessed we are. Happy for us if we are not left, under a verbal confession of his power and care, to indulge in secret reflections that suppose him to be void of both. We have need to be exceedingly mindful that we do not depart from him while we imagine we are sighing to inherit his smiles.

In his kindness exuberant, in his knowledge unsearchable, in his power unlimited, in his faithfulness immutable, and in his attention perpetual, what has the feeblest object of his love to fear? No merit on the part of the helpless offender does he seek, but delights in imparting his favours with the freedom of a God, self-moved in his acts of compassion and salvation. At his liberal hand you cannot expect too much mercy, while he condescendingly promises no less than himself as your portion. He is honoured while we anticipate his goodness, and cast ourselves unreservedly on his undiminishable bounty. He commands us to open our mouths widely in petitioning, assuring us that he will most freely supply our needs. Yea, he anticipates our statements, and even puts words into our mouths wherewith to plead with him.

You, my dear friend, do not intend to offend him by seeming to be dissatisfied with his government, or doubtful of his ability to sustain you through every further event of your fleeting days. You know that he stands engaged to proportion your aid to your difficulties, and to regulate all things by unerring wisdom. In his wise management you may safely confide, nor does it become you to interfere pre-

maturely with his future plans concerning you. Rest in your beloved Lord all your destiny, keeping constant sight of him, setting him always before you in all his perfections, relations, and offices. Consider his honour and your happiness interwoven. He will never disregard either. Judge nothing unscripturally, but remember you are called to know, love, and enjoy divine things here by faith in what the Holy Spirit has said of you. Yes, you have received the Spirit which is of God, that you may inwardly and profitably know the excellent things that are freely given to you of your merciful and covenant-keeping God. Rich in faith, as faith holds all the promises, what high and ineffable cause have you to rejoice in the Lord always, and cheerfully to hope to the end!

You seem to be especially impressed with the prospect of futurity; the anticipation is of all others the most solemn, important, and impressive. But you are not looking for an eternity where Christ is unknown, or where you are to be introduced apart from his interest in your person or praises. He is your forerunner, and in dying you will be as truly following him as when you entered the paths of sanctity and of christian worship. A few years back you followed him into a watery grave, in the day appointed you will follow him into an earthly one, and after this come forth to his presence in the day of his appearing. In the intermediate state you will enjoy a sinless existence, and a perfect rest from all the faults, fears, and cares of this mortal life. By faith alone we stand in this profession; and this faith is the substance, subsistence, foundation, or confidence of things hoped for, and the infallible evidence of things unseen. It *looks to, receives, and endears* the person and work of Christ, and is never found in an unredeemed sinner. Never study death but as in the death of your representative and Lord; it has nothing to do with you justly, but as you belong to Christ as well as to Adam.

When you say, what is that world to which I am hastening? we can have no answer to the inquiry as it respects the mode of enjoying it; but we can as to the authority under which it is bestowed, also the nature of its intelligence, the character of its inhabitants, and the title by which they enjoy it, as well as the extent of its duration. And these are sufficient for our present purposes, and are well suited to promote our attention to duty, and our at-

tachment to privilege. Had you not had an interest there, your affections would not have flown so high, nor your anxiety for a just and gracious title have ever been experienced as it has been and still is.

State your sorrows to your merciful Father in secret, and entreat his blessing to sanctify them to your highest advantage. He can send his Holy Spirit and truth into your soul with transforming and elevating power and effect. Consider, my friend, it is your will, not your Lord's requirement, that you should distress yourself irreligiously. A life of faith is a life of holy recumbency in the care of the unerring God of promises. He says in love to you, "Be of good cheer;" "Fear not, I am with thee." Accept the kindest wishes of

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 128.

To J. S.

Sept. 13, 1831.

My dear young Friend,

It is long since I received your letter, and for some time it got mislaid, and I thus lost sight of the idea of your expecting an answer from me. I can scarcely give you an idea of the difficulty I sometimes find in getting time to write to one and another, and to attend to my necessary duties.

The Lord's eye is always upon you, and he will not forget your real wants and daily exposures. He has not left you without many great and precious promises suited to your every need, and has exhorted you to call on him, and to cast your care on him: 1 Pet. v. 6, 7; Psa. lv. 22; Heb. xiii. 5, 6.

Endeavour to distinguish carefully between your sure salvation, and the assured and enlivening enjoyment of it. Your safety is in Christ, he is your salvation; your happy sense of it is by faith, derived through the power of the Holy Spirit. *This* may be often interrupted by the sin of nature, the follies of those around you, the cares of your employment, and the infirmities of the body; and even the

absence of the useful means of grace, may sometimes leave the soul to become dull and indifferent, in some degree, to the best things, and that while we yet hold them in our judgments to be of the utmost worth.

When God in his unerring providence cuts us off from the public means which we much prefer, he seems to design us to be the more diligent in the use of those more private ones that remain for us, and he also intimates that we are to rely on his all-sufficient grace to uphold us by his Spirit, by reading and meditation on his word, and by ardent prayer. Many whom he loves are called to love and serve him among those that despise his name.

Nehemiah was cup-bearer to a haughty heathen monarch, and yet he could pray while waiting at his master's back, and was made instrumental in promoting the depressed cause of his own people at Jerusalem.

Art thou called being a servant? care not for it; but if thou mayest be free, use it rather. For he that is called in the Lord, being a servant, is the Lord's free man: 1 Cor. vii. 21, 22. Reconciliation to our lot, is both a happiness to ourselves and an honour to our God. This life is transitory, and must soon end; it therefore becomes us to watch against extreme anxiety, and to comfort ourselves with the hope of a blessed hereafter.

I hope your faith remains steady in the truths of the gospel, and that you retain a savour of them on your spirit. To be spiritually minded is life and peace, and is much more than merely being in a state of grace. May the Holy Comforter uphold your faith and hope to the end, and fill you with peace and joy in believing. Cleave to the throne of grace; watch to promote his glory in your thoughts, dispositions, and ways, who has died for your salvation. We have buried some of our members, but none that I think you knew; our attention at Salem is very slack, many are out of town at this time. Mrs. W. has been out some time, but is expected home to day. Mrs. B. is dead, perhaps you might know her—we must all die quickly—may the Lord prepare us for our last home. To be found in Christ is the one thing needful; then, all things are ours: 1 Cor. iii. 21.

God Almighty bless you with a double portion of his grace, and uphold you in his fear to the end. Aim to live upon Christ, to take hold of his strength by faith in his

doctrine and promises, and if you can say, For me to live is Christ, and to die is gain, you may smile at all the rest.

From your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 129.

To MRS. M. J.

July 6, 1837.

My beloved Sister,

My text is on this occasion angelic; yea, from our Father in heaven, and you my sister are mentioned by name in it, and I have no doubt but you are entitled to the grace of it: Luke i. 30. *Fear not, Mary, for thou hast found favour with God.* She that has found favour with God, has found enough to repair all her losses. That you have found favour, you cannot a moment doubt; then Gabriel would not allow you to terrify yourself: and remember Gabriel's Lord speaks in my text. What is it that you may not hope to endure in yourself, and in your babe, with the favour of God? You may dry even a fond mother's tear; your Father who is in heaven knows your babe better than you do, and he has *already determined the fate of its eyes.* He will either spare them, or provide for it without them. You need do no more than act a mother's part, using all reasonable means, and then resign yourself and infant to him that has all wisdom and power, to take a proper care of you and yours.

Remember, Mary, you might have been a lump of lifeless clay, and your helpless babe without a mother, and your husband a widower, had you not found favour with God. Take good heed how you receive the gift of your little one with all its infirmities; it may be sent to teach its fond mother some useful lessons before it can speak a word to her. Its infirmity is not without some end; it is not *bad luck* that has befallen it, but *wise providence that awaits it*, and intends to order its future destiny in this suffering, fleeting life. Should the worst you fear befall it, it may be speedily removed to a land where infirmity is unknown. Judge nothing before the time; leave futurities with him who keeps the times and seasons, events and changes, in his

own power. *You*, having *found favour* at his hands, are loudly called to trust your all in his ever-wise management.

That great God who has shown you favour, is saying, "Fear not, Mary." He knows his intentions concerning you, knows your anxieties, knows your weakness, and he can render his dispensations light, however contrary at present they may be to your maternal feelings. Kiss the rod that may be lifted, beloved Mary; it will fall with less weight upon you. Remember, you have many comforts around you, and not one merited *by* you, though all merited *for* you. You *have* found favour; why should you suppose that favour is not *in all that comes to you*? You have a kind and God-fearing companion for this life, for anything you know, and a greater Friend above. Let remaining mercies stay your mind from all inordinate care or grief, under the unavoidable accompaniments of your joys. In everything give thanks and offer prayers, for this is the will of God concerning you. "*Fear not*," means, "*be of good cheer, Mary*," for God's favour in grace and providence is a portion that forbids disquietude and banishes fear, when enjoyed in believing his gracious words. Hope to the end, my beloved sister, and at the end you will have full satisfaction with all the Lord your God hath led you through. All his ways are *now* right, and *then* you will see them so for yourself; and could sorrow be then felt, I should expect you would then feel regret and shame on recollecting your past disturbance at what infinite wisdom had elected for its own praise.

You are "brought lower than ever," you say: be it so; the Lord whom you adore can help you. "I," said David, "was brought low, and *he* helped *me*." Cast thy care upon him; he careth for you, and will lift you up in due time. Expect enough, ask enough, cast your thoughts through Gethsemane, spend a moment at Calvary, remember the last words of your expiring Lord! think of the *results*, follow him to the mount of Olives, and to the kingdom of his reward. He is living *for* you there, and knows that you are living *by* him here below. He will not break the bruised reed *now*, any more than *before*; you cannot think how much he loves you; you have his promise that he will not leave you. "Fear not, Mary; for thou hast found favour with God." The Father has chosen you, the Son has re-

deemed you, the Holy Spirit has quickened, enlightened, and sanctified you. You have obtained favour which lays you under lasting obligation, and reserves you for everlasting life.

Accept these hints from

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 130.

TO MR. AND MRS. W.

Nov. 21, 1843.

My christian Friends,

Goodness and mercy be ever with you, in your journey through this vale of tears. The trials of time are the servants of eternity; they are working, under the reign of grace, to promote the highest welfare of God's adopted family. By them he wakes his children to a sense of their helpless condition, and promotes a prayerfulness of mind for his promised aid in each distressing hour. Here ye shall have tribulation, said our Lord, but in me ye shall have peace. Unnecessary sorrows are not assigned to the saints, nor any that the God of our hope cannot work by for the furtherance of our welfare in experimental knowledge, liberty, and joy.

I learn that your young son Joshua is suffering affliction in his early days. There is indeed no age exempt; for the seeds of sin and sorrow are sown in our very nature, and are therefore born with us into this weeping life. Such is the evident fact, and to query on this solemn subject must be useless, while every day's experience gives additional proof of the affecting truth. The sighs of afflicted infancy are touching to parental feelings, and the enemy of God and man has not unfrequently made use of them to distress an affectionate parent; and, if possible, to raise a spirit of rebellion against the will of the most high God. But the Lord has taught you, my friends, how to walk with him by faith through the midst of trouble, without doubting his inscrutable wisdom in his ways of grace and providence.

Yes, you I trust can rest in his character, and confide in

his care, even when his footsteps you cannot clearly trace. It will be your part to lay your dear babe at his feet, in faith, and in revering submission to his supreme pleasure. Joshua is more *his* than he can be *yours* : and may he not do as he will with his own ? He cannot but do right, is the Abrahamic faith. You are engaged to walk in the steps of that renowned father of the faithful. In the final disclosures of divine government, you will be constrained not only to acquiesce, but greatly to rejoice. "Just and true are thy ways, thou King of saints. Who shall not fear thee, O Lord, and glorify thy name ? for thou only art holy." May this be your feeling, and be mine, in all the way we go to the land of our fathers, and the kingdom of the blessed. Providences may be illegible to our short sight ; but promises and precepts remain plain. To these let us ever turn, and by these regulate our conduct, and all will prove well at last.

Many calls on my time and attention will not allow me to enlarge further, but I offer you my thanks for your kind present, which I especially value as an expression of your continued affection, while many turn back, and walk no more with me. If the Lord be for us, how cheerfully may we go forward after him who endured great contradiction from sinners, and opposition from saints. It is enough for the servant to be as his Lord. Let us take heed like him to commit our cause to him that judgeth righteously : 1 Peter ii. 2, 3. God Almighty bless you, dear friends, with the blessings above and below, and be your God for ever and ever. So breathes

Your tried and affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 131.

TO THE SAME.

On the Death of their Son.

Feb. 23, 1844.

My esteemed and highly-privileged Friends,

The good and holy Lord of heaven and earth has placed you in circumstances of trial and promotion. In

your case, nature has had a strong ground of emotion and complaint; but I rejoice on your behalf, that you have occupied your trying post with christian fortitude, and still with those expressions of feeling which become the truly affectionate and godly parent in a bereaving hour. To grace be the praise of every good: you have, I trust, suffered without being injured; but not without being benefited in your souls.

It is part of God's design in his dispensations of providence and grace, to better his loved people by his dealings with them. He intends shewing them more fully what his grace can help them to bear. He instructs while he corrects, and forgives while he reproves: in short, the real good of his family is kept in connection with the advancement of his own glory. This to the well-taught disciple, tends to make more light his every sorrow, seeing the glory of God is involved and exalted in what he undergoes. It is a high favour to be able to acquiesce in the demands of our supreme Lord, and to submissively lay at his feet whatever he may call us to resign. To us dependent mortals—to us professing christians, nothing should be deemed too great for us to resign to his pleasure; nothing preferred above obeying his sovereign will. "THY will be done," is language ever becoming the lips of the righteous, in all their circumstances. Nor can they here rebel without great danger, loss, and shame. To dare to set up the creature in our affections higher than God, is to expose ourselves to awful visitations.

On the other hand, to deliver up our dearest treasures at his call in sincere humility, is to attain an honour greater far than the greatest mortal here ever won in any human victory or renown. To honour God is to be honoured: and to serve him is to hold a lofty dominion over mighty forces, internal and external. He that can give himself away to serve his Lord, will find he has gained by his surrender.

My dear friends, I hope you will excuse my not saying much more now; for I am pressed upon in various duties to one and another, and am not able to do what I would. You know some of my hindrances, but not all. If the Lord be for us, then it must be well with us, in spite of all. His friendship gives hope in the valley, and joy on the mountain. It casts around us a shield in the hour of danger, and assigns us a crown when the conflict is ended.

It is a permanent portion, while all creatures are passing and dubious. His love brings all things to our enjoyment; first, by faith in this world; and afterwards, by vision in the next. And Christ in his person, fulness, relations, offices, and acts, in the *all things* in one. May this source be your resort, and of this treasure may you be inheritors daily and for ever. Begging interest in your prayers, I once more subscribe myself,

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

Mrs. S. desires her kind regards to be expressed. "When he hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold."—*Job*.

LETTER 132.

TO THE SAME.

Dec. 23, 1845.

To the Household of Caleb, beloved in the Lord, and called to be saints, (Rom. i. 7.)

Dearly Beloved,

You may know that one of your ancestors was well reported of in the houses of Israel, as a man that wholly followed the Lord. The very name *Caleb*, signifies one who is *hearty*, or acts *with all his heart*. This is an excellent quality, may it reign in your whole house, that, believing with all your hearts, and loving God and one another with your whole hearts, and with your whole souls, you may retain the leading feature which distinguished your renowned relative in the days of Moses and Joshua. You well know that a mere name is useless for the approaching future. I trust, my friends, that the Most High God has blessed you all with that blessing which is life for evermore. This will well sustain the name *with its acquisitions*, that in your spiritual distinction and union, I may speak of Caleb, Caleb-*Martha*, and Caleb-*Ann*, three *hearty* friends of the cause of God and truth!

All such persons, having obtained a good report by faith, will not only be esteemed among their tribes on earth, and on their way to the promised land, but they will be marked

by favour when they come to the end of their travels, and enter the boundaries of the promised land. Then our truly victorious Joshua will assign the house of Caleb the portion of the land that had been promised to them in the covenant from of old. For whatsoever hath been spoken shall surely come to pass; his word shall stand for ever. We are at present pursuing the winding paths of the wilderness, and though our forty years must be here spent, we have ground to expect our promised rest at the set time. Caleb had to fight for his heritage. Your case is different; all your conflict lies in your way to the inheritance; there are no Canaanites to expel from your land; God has ejected the angels that sinned long since. They oppose you on your way to it, but cannot prevent your obtainment of it. Therefore when you have passed the Jordan of death, you at once gain admission into the mansions prepared for you! So said the well-informed apostle, "Absent from the body, present with the Lord." Then let us "fight the good fight of faith, and lay hold on eternal life." This life is indeed a warfare; the world to come is a life of harmony, peace, and joy.

All report of this kind is as a mere tale that is told unless faith be exercised in the reception of it, and the heart be moved to take an interest in it. It is the work of saving faith to realize things unseen, and to give them subsistence in the mind. Thus, he that believeth entereth into his rest. We have boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus. Herein we have our right of entrance, and also our meetness comes through the same interest. When one of the elders, in John's vision, described the persons who appeared in view, he said, "These are they who came up out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb: THEREFORE are they before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple." There is no night there; the meaning is, they serve him constantly.—

"There every breath is heavenly praise,
There light is God's essential blaze,
There love is life, and work is rest;
Oh! may I there be ever blessed."

To this delightful, sinless home and society, may we more ardently aspire. Time is bearing us on rapidly through his boundary! The old year is soon to leave us,

and we are one year nearer the goal than what we have ever been before ! Let us press towards the mark for the prize, the promised crown of endless life. I write to you all ; I am connected with you all, in the important fellowship of the gospel, and of the church of the Lord Jesus.

I am glad to see you all adhere to your church covenant, and that I trust it is witness that your hearts are with him in whose sheltering name we profess to assemble. God Almighty bless you all, and give you fortitude, patience, and perseverance in the path of duty. Seek his honour who died in a crown of thorns ; never fear, then, but he will secure your priestly diadem, and crown you with glory and honour in his own right at the last day.

Accept my thanks for your kind remembrance of me heretofore, in the gift of wine to cheer my spirits. With best wishes for you all in Christ, I remain, though feeble,

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

“ Good when he gives, supremely good,
Nor less, when he denies ;
E’en crosses from his sovereign hand,
Are blessings in disguise.”

LETTER 133.

TO MR. GEORGE PEARSON.

Dec. 19, 1837.

My christian Brother,

I was sorry to hear of late of your great decline of health, and that to so serious a degree, as to lead you to apprehend your pilgrimage on earth must soon terminate. Still, though I thus write, I would not forget that death to the servants of our Lord is the highest promotion, except that which will be assigned them after the resurrection of their bodies, and the final judgment is past. The present scene of changing things around us, constantly bears witness that this is not man's last condition of being ; but is preparatory and introductory to the final state, of either misery or bliss for ever.

To you the present has been a land of tears and trials, of pleasures and pains ; but what is best of all, it has long

been a land of discovery and of hope. The light of the upper world has at times cheered your journey, so that though you have wept, you have also rejoiced. May the last part of your course be illumined by a true sense of your inseparable union with him who is the Perfecter of all the adopted family, and the kind intercessor for them all continually. In him your best life is hidden and secure, and with him your future state is reserved. You are, I trust, kept looking in faith to him as your all beyond this fleeting heritage of uncertain abode. It is your mercy to have made surrender long since of your most important treasure into his hands, who died for your freedom, and lives for your defence. And you are well assured that he is able to keep your deposit until that hastening day, in which he has engaged to appear to the perfect salvation of his ransomed people. We have long since looked for the rest that remaineth for the weary and worn-out saints of the Most High. The Lord help us, as we are now much nearer to it than when we first believed, to lay hold on eternal life, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God. I am sometimes reckoning that I can hardly esteem my time more than a boy's apprenticeship, and I know not that it may ever prove so much as that. Blessed be the Lord for a calm persuasion that going hence will be going home to a good Father and a most happy brotherhood. We have some kind friends gone forward; others are on the road; but the chief object on whom my thoughts seem to dwell, is him who expired in a crown of thorns, that I might receive a crown of glory. I have had, and still have many friends; but he is the maker of them. It is his friendship that I enjoy through them; it is his influence in them that makes them what they are to me. He is the fountain—they are conveying vessels. Keep your eye upon him, my friend; this will hold up your spirit in the day of calamity, and in the article of death. God always views his elect in his chosen one, and *as he is*, so they appear, and *where he is*, they shall be; and in him they are already seated, even in heavenly places. Should I see you no more in this vale of tears, I hope to meet you in the land of the living, where our Redeemer reigns.* Accept my acknowledgment of your kind acts in

* On the arrival of this letter, Mr. Pearson was already in the vale of death, and consequently never perused this last token of faithful, christian friendship.

years long gone, when we in one church-state enjoyed for a while those mutual feelings of friendship which one cannot wish to entirely forget. God will be with you, my brother, in the last stages of your journey. Be much in prayer, ever worship by a Mediator, take him for righteousness, and no condemnation is remaining to you. Cast your family cares into the hand of the Lord; he can provide and protect: Jer. xlix. 11; Psa. x. 14; lxviii. 5; Hosea xiv. 3.

We are here as usual; have much more reason for gratitude than for complaining. Give my kind love to Mr. C. and the friends I know around; and believe me

Yours sincerely in our holy Lord,

JOHN STEVENS.

Remember me kindly to your daughters. Farewell in Jesus. God will be with you, I trust.

LETTER 134.

TO MRS. ANN HOLLAND.

May 21, 1841.

My long esteemed Friend,

In a note received from Mr. Felton, I was informed of your being "extremely ill." Remembering that like myself you are hasting towards the great end of life's shortening journey, and that it might be doubtful whether I should see you again in the flesh, I felt determined, if possible, to reserve a little time to write a few lines to you, in token of my christian sympathy for a sister in the Lord Jesus, from whom I and mine have received many expressions of kindness by word and deed during the course of more than thirty years. I sincerely thank you and your kind husband, for the friendly and hospitable treatment afforded me, and shall be glad again to see my friends in their peaceful dwelling, if the God of all our mercies shall have permitted to us that satisfaction.

And now, my friend, how are matters between you and the God of all truth and grace? When we arrive so near the banks of Jordan, it is indeed very desirable to have our hearts fixed trusting in the Lord Jesus. Many years have passed since you were buried with him in baptism, and rose

in him to a newness of life. You then put on Christ by confession and conduct, and he has kept you still professing his sacred and saving name. He is still of the same mind towards you; and so, I trust, are you of the same mind towards him.

I embrace the present opportunity of mentioning some things which you have often thought of in the course of your journey. Jesus Christ came into the world on purpose to save lost and perishable sinners, even the chief of sinners have been and still are saved by him. On his bleeding death, and in his perfect obedience, you are led to rely. His good works are sufficient for your discharge, for he is the end of the law for righteousness to every soul that looks to him, and relies on him for salvation. Blessed are all they that trust in him. All the prophets unite in testifying, that whosoever believeth in him shall receive remission of sins: Acts x. 43; xiii. 38, 39.

Now this is *your* belief—your faith has worked by producing love to Christ, to his gospel, to his praying people, and to his holy ways. Remember his grace is free and plenteous, his blood cleanseth from all sin, of thought, of temper, of word, of deed, of negligence, of discontent, and ingratitude. This fountain is open for sin and uncleanness; and as you have been convinced of the sin of your nature and ways, that conviction is designed to bring to the fountain, and to show you that it is opened for you and to you.

Remember the dignity of our Saviour's person and character; he is mighty to save,—more able to save the soul that flees to him for salvation, than all the power of sin and Satan is or can be to destroy. May the Holy Spirit raise your affections to heaven, and fill you with joy and peace in believing. The frail body is apt to weigh down the soul, and bewilder the mind. Pain, sickness, faintness, and feebleness, are apt to depress the spirits. But the Lord regards the sighs and groans of his suffering saints, Rom. viii. 26, 27; and promises never to leave them. Cast thy burden on the Lord, *he can, he will* sustain thee.

The sting of death is taken away, only the stroke remains. Death by stinging our Surety and Redeemer, lost all ability to sting his disciples to their eternal death. Expect all the help you really need, and humbly ask for it for Christ's sake; for sufficient strength is prepared and promised. "My grace is sufficient for thee," is the Saviour's language every

hour. God Almighty bless you, my dear sister in the Lord, and be your covenant-keeping God and portion, when flesh and heart fail: Psa. lxxiii. 26; Lam. iii. 24; Isa. xli. 10; Psa. xxiii. 4; Rev. xiv. 13. Accept this token of my sincere christian affection in Jesus' name.

Farewell in Jesus Christ,

My kind friend, farewell,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 135.

TO MR. THOMAS CHEW.

Dec. 10, 1841.

My venerable Brother in the relation of grace,

Having heard that you were lying at the banks of the Jordan, in expectation of passing through the narrow deep in a short season, I felt disposed to write a line or two in christian good will and sympathy for our Saviour's sake, not forgetting that I am hasting thither also, and that, though at present in good health, I may for aught I know, be called to pass the river before you: this mortal life is a dubious heritage to all, though the time and manner of dying be perfectly known to our heavenly Father. I have long reckoned it a serious change, as it certainly is a final one, and to the free-born sons of God must be a blessed one. The article of death, however, is in itself unwelcome to nature, nor can it be otherwise: its painful *stroke* remains to be endured, even when its *sting* is removed. Having left its sting in our suffering *Representative*, when he hung on the cross, it cannot sting the *represented* also. Over the ransomed of our God the second death hath no power. The power of death, in the case of the true believer, extends only to the stripping him of his fleshly garment of many colours; it cannot dispose of him as a captive. His *invisible* coverings remain uninjured by the rude hand of death, and in the garments of salvation he is found clothed, and is therein admitted to appear before the throne of glory, as one whose robes are washed, and whose tribulations are finally ended: Rev. vii. 14. And this refers to a robe that never had a stain, nor ever can become any the

worse for wearing. This immaculate work, woven throughout by our Redeemer's hands, constitutes an excellent coverlet for the death-bed of a saint. This *best robe* justifies, dignifies, adorns, and distinguishes, all who receive and wear it by faith. There is nothing known that more tends to destroy servile fear of death and judgment to come. But you, sir, I think have known its vast importance and use longer than I have. You will, however, do well to keep hold of it as firmly as possible, and aim to fix your eye upon it steadily. It does honour to its author, and sheds a glory on all who are found arrayed in it. If this divine covering be for a time overlooked, latent deformities appear, and death being at hand, the soul feels a trembling at the prospect before her. And some are tried the more through being called to depart in a merely *reflected* light, after the sun has gone down, for then the soul is more liable to feel depression and fearfulness. In God's favour is life, and though weeping may endure for a night, yet joy cometh in the morning. Our state for eternity is one thing, our sensible enjoyment is another. Our holy Lord died under a cloud of suspension, crying, My God, my God, why has thou forsaken me? Yet he could say: *It is finished.* He died a conqueror, and because he has overcome, so shall all his followers. The christian warrior conquers by endurance, and though oft cast down in the contest, he is never destroyed. David's words may suit your case; can you but adopt them in the light of the Holy Spirit? "God hath made with me an everlasting covenant, ordered in all things, and sure: for this is all my salvation, and all my desire. Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth:" *Psa. xxxi. 5.* To this agree the words of dying Stephen, "Lord Jesus, receive my spirit." Thus may you be enlightened by the presence of the Lord, and strengthened to give up your spirit in the faith of interest in the blood and obedience of our exalted Lord; so shall your end be everlasting peace.

Please to accept this small expression of brotherly affection for Jesus's sake,

From yours in ours,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 136.

TO MRS. G.

Oct. 6th, 1842.

My esteemed Friend,

Grace and peace be with you in the true knowledge of Jesus our Lord. I have through one hindrance or another been prevented from answering your friendly letter until now, and now I am so unwell that I know not how to write. I have not occupied Salem pulpit since the morning of Sept. 18. I am afflicted with a cough so violent and lasting that I sometimes think it will surely end me. But this can be of no use to you; more than enough is now said about such an insignificant creature. I think I shall see Boston no more, but must reserve what little I can do for my own flock in Salem.

I am sorry for you in regard to the means of edification. Though it be a barren land, the Lord can make it cheerful, by shining on his word, and directing your contemplations thereon. As to your sense of ignorance, that need not discourage you; none but those who feel their need of instruction will ever honestly seek for it. The weak are always more numerous than the strong—and I think there is more notice taken of them in the family book. Keep praying on, the Lord hears, though he delays to answer; he has good reasons for his conduct in governing the world and the church as he does, only we are not at present capable of knowing them to any good purpose or end. We have not duly exemplified what we already know.

You may by scriptural conversation assist those around you; as to your pride being a reason why you are not engaged, I imagine if the vanity and pride of parsons were allowed to put them *out of* office, we should soon have but few remaining *in*. Still pride is a hateful and hurtful thing; you will not suffer injuriously by it while you "loathe yourself by reason of it."

The words you refer to form part of our Lord's address to the lukewarm church then at Laodicea. To him that should overcome the prevailing evils of the times, he promised a share in his victory and reign, as the Head, Prince, and Saviour of his people. The conquering saints are to share in the man-glory of Christ, as he will ever share in the

divine glory and dominion of his Father, being a person of the infinite essence, as well as man with men. Nor does this deny his being man with God, or God with us: Matt. i. 23. The throne of the Lamb, is elsewhere, the throne of God: Rev. vii. 15—17; xxii. 1—3; John xvii. 24—26; Rom. v. 5. The promotion of the saints is in the hand of the Lord Christ, and is the gift of his grace. Their overcoming does not merit their crowns, yet it leads on to the enjoyment of them, and is that to which they are promised. The sufferings and warfare of Christ preceded his glorification, and it will be the same with his true disciples. It is enough for the disciple to be as his Master, and for the servant to be as his Lord. Paul's prayers are well worth your serious regard. The words you point to are very full: 2 Thess. i. 12, 13. They teach us that the apostles were men of constant prayer for all the saints: "we pray *always for you*." They conceived of God in an interested way, saying, "*Our* God." It is covenant language, and Paul prayed that God would reckon and accept them as worthy, and meet to be partakers of the heavenly calling, both in a way of present grace and of future glory. They shall walk with me in white, for they are worthy: Rev. iii. 4. He seems to have prayed, "That God may impart to you *that* to which he hath called you." That he would cause them to walk worthy of the grace received and of the glory sought: Col. i. 10; Eph. iv. 1; Luke xxi. 36; 1 Thess. ii. 12.

Paul speaks not of God's pleasure only, but of the pleasure of his goodness, and also of the good pleasure of his goodness. He names *all* the good pleasure of his goodness, and also speaks of "his good pleasure which he hath purposed in himself." He fulfils the work of faith with power, in causing it to be carried on, and made effectual to all the important ends ordained: to apprehend mysteries, to receive things invisible, to admit Christ to dwell in the heart, in the dignity of his person, in the merit of his obedience and blood, in the power of his Spirit, to live upon him as our life, to trust in him as our *responsible* Surety and Redeemer, to imitate him as our Pattern, to rejoice in him as our exalted Captain and Friend. In and through him God *fulfils* all the good pleasure of his goodness, and the work of faith in a saving and powerful manner. So that the name of our Lord Jesus Christ is glorified in us, and we in him, accord-

ing to the riches of saving grace. I am so ill I can only add my best wishes on your behalf, and that of Mr. G. Mrs. S. desires her love. I have not spoken to your son for some days, through lack of opportunity. The Lord be ever near, ever dear ; heaven is thrown open ; that you call HOME, so does,

Your affectionate and afflicted Pastor,
JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 137.

TO MR. AND MRS. G.

April 28, 1846.

My highly esteemed Friends,

Through the good hand of God I continue to this day testifying the gospel of the blessed God our Saviour, and looking for that blessed hope of which the sacred Scripture speaks so abundantly. Our best heritage though not in sight, is yet in promise, though unseen is not unknown ; though undeserved, is not undesired. But there is an appointed time unto man on earth, which must be spent before he can go home to his house which is in heaven. Our life, however, is but like a vapour, which appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away. But it is also true that as time resigns us, eternity receives us ; as earth retires, heaven draws near to the man of God. He leaves much behind him, and yet suffers no loss. What he leaves he will never want, and what he gains he can never lose nor waste. If to live be an enjoyment of Christ, then to die is endless gain. We readily admit these sentiments, and yet how we linger about this earthly inheritance ! How reluctant is nature to resign its hold ! We may see our backwardness in the conduct of Lot, when the angels laid hold upon his hand to hasten him out of the condemned city, before the dreadful storm came on : Gen. xix. 16. The Lord being merciful to him. How great is his mercy to poor sinful mortals still ! Did he not take hold of us, and bring us out of this evil world, we are so earthly and heedless that we should be lost in the tempest of his punitive justice. But he will not suffer any of his just Lots to perish. He who so kindly delivered just Lot, knoweth how

to deliver the godly out of temptations, and to reserve the unjust unto the day of judgment to be punished: 2 Pet. ii. 7—9. There is nothing too hard for him to effect, he can save and he can destroy. Yet he never can deny himself, he never will do unjustly, either towards his foes or his friends. The innocent he could annihilate if it pleased him; but they cannot be objects of his punitive justice. Yet crime and punishment are inseparable; neither are holiness and happiness divisible: hast thou the *former*? then thou shalt have the *latter*. Sin that is hated has lost its damning power. It has a *being* in those who hate it, but it has a *pardon* too, and hence arises a sense of reverence for God, Psa. cxxx. 4, and a sincere love for his name. We have a promise that sin shall not have or hold dominion over us, because we are not under the law, but under grace. Now under the reign of grace, we have a Mediator, and we are allowed a Counsellor to plead for us, and thus law suffers no loss of obedience though the sinner is released from its power. Justice is established because Jesus suffered, and sin is pardoned because Christ was punished; the Saviour is loved because the sinner is saved, and sin is hated because the Saviour is loved. O the riches of mercy, of wisdom, of merit, and of blessedness! This plan is just to God—is safe to man. It claims our consideration, and exceeds all our praise. O sing praises, said David, sing praises. Still, he whom we adore is exalted above all blessing and praise: Neh. ix. 5.

“But when we raise our highest notes,
His love can ne’er be told.”

It is your mercy to know these things for yourselves, they will be the help of your declining days, and faith in Jesus will bear you up under the wreck of nature and the end of life. The end of one life is the introduction of another. Faith is the confidence of things hoped for, and the evidence of things unseen: Heb. xi. 1. True faith works by love to things believed, and to him in whom they are provided. Aim to keep sight of your mercies, remember they are sent to call you to him that sends them. Observe the many years you have had them, notwithstanding all the imperfections that must have been open to his omniscient eyes.

I hope you are both still favoured with your accustomed health and activity. I feel as if it would gratify me to see

you again; but the distance is great. All my journeys are appointed of God, but I cannot see far before me. Express my christian love to all the friends of *my* Lord and *yours*.

I remember your hospitality with gratitude: and must now say once more, grace and peace be with you, and with you as a church; and I pray you express my sincere love to Mr. Potter, long may he stand fast in the Lord, and be a blessing to you all. I can but admire his integrity.

Believe me through life, yours in true affection,
For Christ's sake,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 138.

To Mr. W.

Aug. 1, 1843.

My christian Brother,

All things are in the hand of him with whom we have to do. The God of our being, the Author of our breath, can sustain us to bear that which he thinks well to permit. Nothing is too hard for him: I know that thou canst do every thing, and that no thought can be withholden from thee, said Job: xlii. 2. This God is our God for ever, and he will be our guide unto death. What you say is very becoming: "*It is not my province to mark out a line for divine procedure.*" It certainly is not; his infinite understanding and rightful sovereignty forbid it. The *whole* case for judgment is before him, only *a part* of it is before you. He is not doing or permitting to be done, any thing in your case that can prove finally injurious, and the sufferings of this mortal life are working in his hand the advantage of his sufferers, and the praise of himself. You are apparently called to give up a dear wife to his disposing hand; but remember, Jesus Christ gave up *his own life* for you. Observe also that your loved companion is hastened on to *rest, peace, and joy*, that shall never be interrupted, and I am sure you wish her well; therefore without great inconsistency you cannot oppose the Lord's claims. He knows the many heavy sighs of your bosom, he sees you value the friend he has given you, and will not take back

the gift without helping you to resign it to his hand. Suppose some unfeeling but conquering General, at the head of a plundering host of ruffians, had vanquished the protecting power under which you had lived happy and safe with your wife, and on seeing her, violently took her from you, how different must your feelings have been to what they now are, in seeing her removed by his authority who first gave her, and whose designs are only spiritual and holy, and such as will finally allow you to share in the society of your companion again for ever, only in a far more exalted sense, and with a pleasure as much more refined, as heaven is superior to this earthly state. In this supposition you will recollect the cases of Abraham and Isaac. Besides, you are to remember that in the circumstance of your afflicted wife, she has the right of giving up herself to her heavenly husband, and can do it, through grace, without evincing any want of love to you, either natural or spiritual, the condition of her mortal body being duly considered. You are not forbidden to shed the tear of sorrow at parting, in a submissive spirit. Jesus wept. O that the eternal Spirit may strengthen you to take the best view of the subject the case can present. It is—it must be—a stinging event; but how much more must you have been pained, had you heard only the language of despondency and disquiet from the lips of the sufferer! How great is the mercy to you both that her hope is firmly fixed as an anchor in the storm! Thus may it remain, for we are saved by hope. Pray express my true fraternal and pastoral affection to your dear wife; she is often before my eyes, and daily I attempt to name her case before our Lord, and I trust he will not forsake his handmaiden in the day of her calamity, but will be near at hand in every future need. The counsel given is, “Cast thy *burden* on the Lord, and he will *sustain* thee; he will never suffer the righteous to be moved:” *Psa. lv. 22.* Now you are like Zacharias and Elizabeth, both *righteous* before God, having believed unto righteousness, even the righteousness of Jesus Christ, which makes a sinner just and uncondemnable; therefore on Christ’s account you will be *sustained*, and not be moved from the hope of the gospel. This you are to expect through casting your *care* upon the Lord, who *careth* for you: *1 Pet. v. 6, 7.* He has, it appears, chosen you *to do him honour by trusting and confessing him*, in the furnace of affliction. If he

take your dearest object from you, he will, I trust, do you honour by so acting. Can you not give the best of your possessions to him, who gave his only begotten Son for you : even to suffer the deepest sorrow and pain for you ? He does not require you to give up your only wife for to suffer the hottest wrath, but that she may enter into the highest joys of which she can be capable, and this to remain for ever. Here you may see the abounding of his mercy over all your service and sacrifice for him. God bless you both, and be an all-sufficient aid in a trying hour. Accept the love of

Your sympathizing Friend,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 139.

Oct. 17, 1845.

To the household of Pullin, beloved in the Lord, and called to be saints. Grace, mercy, and peace to every one of you by Christ Jesus.

Dearly beloved,

Among yourselves you have peculiar representations of the diversity of circumstances met with in the course of this changing life below. One of your company has been on the journey of life for many rolling years, and is therefore on the eve of departure ; while another has but just entered on the stage of action, and scarcely can be said to have set out on the road to a future world. The contrast of an aged relative and a newly-born babe invites your consideration. Both are the constant care of him who rules the vast universe of beings, animate and inanimate. The tottering frame of multiplied years, and the delicate constitution of helpless infancy, are upheld and continued according to the will of him who is Lord over all, and the Saviour of many.

With the venerable aged, some fellowship may be had, grace having commenced an endless life of knowledge, holiness, and enjoyment, before the spark of natural life has become quenched ; but with infancy we can hold no communion, that stage of life being only able to receive, and not to communicate. Yet the honour of our God is con-

nected with this passive state of existence. In age and infancy his hand is seen, and his good providence is constantly working to accomplish the counsel of his sovereign will. You, my brother, have before your eyes a twofold display of the mysterious works of God's hand; one in which the creature is gradually diminishing in its capacity, another in which natural powers are going on to improve; one is ending the troublesome voyage of mortal life, the other is but just going on board the vessel, and has all the dangers of the sea to expect, though mercifully much concealed until the storm comes on. While I look at the aged, covered with infirmities, which only death can obliterate, I congratulate the departing saint on her having but little more to suffer, and being near the happy shore of endless rest. Rest from all the bitter woes of a sinful life; from all the lamentable defects of service; and from all the perturbations of this changing world, both among saints and sinners.

"From sinners and from saints,
I meet with many a blow;
My own bad heart creates a smart,
Which only God can know.
Still wait awhile, and thou shalt see,
His love in all that comes to thee."

When I behold the helpless infant, what a picture of weakness and dependence is presented. How impossible for me to foresee what mighty events may be connected with this little creature's appearance on the theatre of action. It may be sent to wield the sword of war and death to thousands; or to promulgate the joyful tidings of mercy and peace among wretched men. Or if a female, to be the honoured mother of a cluster of God's elected family, and to go before them into that blissful state of conscious felicity which awaits all the faithful in Christ Jesus.

You, my friend, are in the middle stage of life, with your loved companion, who is I hope with yourself in good health, allowing for her circumstances. You have an important trust together, a growing family to nurture and to rule, if possible, according to the sacred profession you have been honoured to enter upon. May wisdom and courage be yours, and dutifulness mark the conduct of your children as they grow up to understanding. Remember that loving them best appears in right ruling, rather than in indulging the passions of fallen humanity. Your graces

will be all wanted in the sphere assigned you, and the aid of the Eternal Spirit also will be needful to uphold you in all your ways. God Almighty bless and keep you through precious faith, and grant you his gracious presence to the end.

Please to express my christian love to my aged and esteemed sister Howson. By christian love, I mean love for Christ's sake, considering that Christ has loved her, has died for her, is gone to heaven to prepare a place for her, and is daily mindful of his aged handmaid, and will before long send for her spirit, to join the spirits of the just made perfect. I recommend her to be every day putting on by faith the mantle of perfect righteousness, which Jesus finished on his dying day. It will also fit you and your good wife, and it serves to cover and adorn

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 140.

To MRS. HOWSON.

Sept. 25, 1846.

To my aged sister Howson, and the esteemed household of which she is a venerable member.

Grace, mercy, and endless peace be with you all through a scriptural knowledge of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ. If he be rightly known, that knowledge will attract all other benefits. His relation is most extensive, and his authority is universal. In him is treasured up all that is needful to the safety and happiness of his members. He is made the fulness of all the vessels of mercy, and to him shall they all come for supplies in every time of need. You, my friends, *are* come; you have been receiving of his fulness for some time; you have drank of the living water, and felt its heart-reviving power. You have tasted of the living bread, from heaven sent; you therefore know its nourishing quality. If a man eat of this bread, said our Lord, he shall live for ever.

He himself is our spiritual food; believing in him is called

eating his flesh and drinking his blood. Thus we are said to live by faith, because by faith we receive and rely upon Christ for pardon and life eternal. Our souls are refreshed hereby, our hope is invigorated, our desires are enlivened, our love is drawn forth and excited, our expectations are raised afresh and greatly encouraged, our fears are greatly diminished. We see in a new light, we feel in a new life, we act in new strength, and rejoice in new discoveries of everlasting things.

There are, however, dark and cloudy seasons that await us; this we may reckon to be our family portion. This is one of the characters under which the Lord inquires after, and encourages in his own people. "Who," saith he, "is among you that feareth the Lord, that obeyeth the voice of his servant, that walketh in darkness, and hath no light?" Mark, it is admitted that they *fear* God, and that they *obey* his voice, spoken by his servant, and yet they have *no light*.^{*} They also *walk*, though in darkness; they travel much by night. Here is a good character given for *reverence, obedience, and going on* in the way, and yet there is a great suspension of light. Now what saith the Lord to these worshipping people? "Let them trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon their God." They are children of light walking through darkness; they are *not children of darkness*, though they are said to have no light. A man's being in darkness is no proof that he is blind; he may have good eyes, though he has no light. To such the Lord says, "Trust in the name of the Lord, and stay upon thy God." The Lord declares himself his God in the darkness, and enjoins him to stay upon him *as* his God: Isa. x. 20. To *stay*, is to *trust* with a fixedness of mind, on the power, the promise, and the faithfulness of God. Such shall never be confounded; for God will never suffer his faithfulness to fail. For if we believe not, he abideth faithful, he cannot deny himself: 2 Tim. ii. 13. We learn from Isa. l. 10, that God knows when his children walk in darkness; and that he will either remove the cloud that enwraps them, or guide and uphold them while passing through it. He teaches that when we cannot see, we are to rely upon our guide; and thus by *his* being a light unto us, we can prosecute our journey homeward in the darkest season. He has promised to make darkness light before us, and crooked

^{*} No consolation.

things straight; and not only will he do this, but he will be present with us. "These things will I do unto them, and not forsake them:" Isa. xlii. 16.

My aged sister, how vast is the mercy of our God, in sustaining us through so many years of imperfect service, in bearing with our manners, in maintaining our convictions, our desires, our hopes to this day. We can *do* nothing, scarcely, for him, yet he remembers us. Keep fast hold of the skirt of his garment. "If I may but touch his garment," said the woman, "I shall be whole:" Matt. ix. 21. This you may do by faith, *beholding, believing in, relying on*, and *pleading* the Saviour's obedience to the law that you are condemned by, for your justification and acceptance with God. Christ is the end of the law by fulfilling it, and faith is to believe this, and hereby to yield joy and peace: Rom. x. 4; v. 1; Isa. xlv. 24, 25. He, my sister, is made of God unto us righteousness, a foundation of justification. God bless you all, and be your portion for ever. So prays

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 141.

To MR. POTTER.

June 17, 1845.

My christian Brother,

I was pleased with your letter on more grounds than one, dated May 1, 1845. I imagined that I could perceive a good degree of improvement in your mind, and in your communication of your thoughts on points of truth and experience. I trust the good Lord will continue to spiritualize your habit of thinking, and your manner of using your sentimental views, to give them a due bearing on those sacred ends for which inspired doctrines are made known to men.

The important truths of the everlasting gospel are grievously suppressed and neglected by men of cultivated intellect; brilliancy of talent is often displayed I doubt not; but too much negligence is evident towards the personal excellence, intrinsic worth, and saving merit of our Lord

Jesus Christ. Still they are stirring times in which we live, there is much to be thankful for, while we lament over the rapid and extensive spread of Arminianism. It seems to me that little else can be patiently heard. The Lord, however, is overruling the spirit of the times, for the printing and spreading of his Word in a wonderful manner among many nations. This is a strong indication that he is about to enlarge his kingdom, and to scatter the *gross* darkness of the heathen nations: Mal. i. 11; Isa. xxix. 18; Dan. xii. 4. They who have deepest judgment in theological subjects will continue to be the few, and they will have to carve for themselves as the Lord the Spirit may enable them. Most, almost all, ministers are likely to adapt their ministrations to the prevailing taste of the multitude. However some few may continue to reject a probable salvation, the educated many will applaud that plan which holds the determination of future destiny in human power, and management of entrusted endowments, and opportunities of securing their own salvation. They prefer hearing chiefly about what they are to do, rather than what is to be believed. Nevertheless gross ignorance and infidel principles are strongly repulsed by the arguings of our academical men. They can work in the enlargement of the outer court of christian profession, and in all pecuniary matters they can draw the multitude of nominal christians to give up their money for the conversion of souls, especially the souls of poor heathens. So that good is done in some respects, though not much gospel is taught connectedly and consistently. We must all aim to do what good we can, according to our light and means. Every minister's work is measured out to him, nor can any one do another's work. I hope the Lord will endow you with wisdom, and keep you stedfast to the end. I am sorry poor W. has lapsed in sentiment; they are safe whom God keeps. On the Antinomian side we have our wonderful men, so that to avoid extremes, and to keep close to a consistent and well connected view of truth is the more safe procedure.

Now as to your acknowledgment of me, poor thing as I am, I can only thank you for every expression of kindness, and request you to pray for me, that I may be of some service the few days I may have to tarry in this land of dying. And further, respecting my visiting my old friends again—I fear to say anything positively, but should my strength

remain as it is, I will venture to hope I may be enabled to come some time in August, but I will write so as for you to have a fortnight's notice of the day when you may expect me.

Mrs. G.'s dismissal will be granted at our meeting on the 24th, which is our regular time. Express my christian love to her, and to all friends. I have my son Erastus here from America, whom I had not seen for nearly twenty-three years. We are as usual at Salem. You ought to write letters on church affairs, and get them signed by the deacons. I could not read Mr. B.'s address without altering it. I intend answering his note in a few days. Kind regards to Mrs. P.

Yours very truly for Christ's sake,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 142.

TO MR. EDWARD ROWELL.

Nov. 8, 1843.

My christian Friend,

It is true I had intended writing to you, as I heard of your being very ill, and thought I would say a word or two before you went away to the high country, for it was deemed probable that you might not long remain. It seems however that you, like me, have to endure the field of conflict a little longer. All our times are in his hand; he knoweth the days of the upright, and their inheritance shall be for ever. Thrice happy people are they whose God is Jehovah; he careth for them and will surely plead their cause. If this God be our God now, he will be so unto our dying hour, nor will he disown us even after death. Whom he loves he never wholly leaves. He can hide his face, but he cannot change his heart. He cannot increase his love, but he can increase our sense of its greatness and freeness. He sometimes shows it by a rod of correction, and at other times by sending a loaf of shew-bread: *Exod. xxv. 30; 1 Sam. xxi. 6.* Bread from God's house is sweet to a hungry man, and it belongs to the royal priesthood: *1 Pet.*

ii. 9. It is the staff of life, and is undiminished by eating. It never grows stale by keeping, nor ever promotes disease by being eaten. I never knew any one that suffered by eating too heartily of it. It is the only bread in England that is cheap, and is not taxed by parliament. It is, like the air we breathe, as free to the peasant as it is to the peer. Its worth to the receiver is above calculation. It is worthy of observation, that neither swine nor dogs will eat it: Matt. vii. 6; xv. 26; Phil. iii. 2; Rev. xxii. 15. Nor does it appear our Lord's will that it should be offered to them; this however is not the opinion of many. Whoever hungers after it is warranted to ask for a supply of his wants daily: Matt. vi. 11. No man perisheth through a scarcity of this bread, but all who eat of this bread shall live for ever. They eat it in heaven, and it is the heavenly manna, and was typified by that which was laid up in a golden pot, in the holiest of all: Heb. ix. 4. You, my friend, have had a portion of it many a time; and I recommend it in all cases of sickness, weakness, dullness of spirits, drowsiness, heart-ache, faintness, swimming in the head, and in short, in any disorder of the mind. If you try it I doubt not but you will find benefit, and will never blame me for commending it to your notice. The more you take of it, the more you will like it. You will meet with it at times in the conventicles, where you find a few true Jews meet together, and you will find one of them handing it out to all who have any appetite: Rom. ii. 28, 29.

In some places they offer it continually, and they speak hypothetically, saying, If you will do so and so, you shall have a taste of it; and if you will part with this and that, then you may have this bread; but I question if these dispensers have any authority for their huckstering system. However, you are not so able as some profess to be, perhaps; you had therefore better attend those places where they give it out at once freely, without money and without price. In these connections you will hear of the freeness of God's love, and of the gifts of his grace. It will, however, become you to be very thankful for free entertainment, and of good behaviour towards any one of those who may act as almoners to the King of Zion, and shew yourself ready to serve in his house in anything that you may seem able to do. I must now close my account of refreshment, and wishing you a good appetite, and a plentiful table set out,

I commend you to the care of him, whose friendship is little known, though often talked of by man, and by

Your willing servant in the gospel of salvation,

JOHN STEVENS.

Remember me kindly to Mrs. R. and your family, to Mr. and Mrs. I., Mr. and Mrs. E., and to Mrs. F., if yet in this world. I know she is in Christ; the Lord be her light to the end. I am mercifully well at present, my household also. I thank you for your kind remembrance of me; I am but a moderate servant, but I have the best of Masters.—Farewell in Jesus.

LETTER 143.

TO THE SAME.

April 29, 1845.

My esteemed Friend,

We are living in a dying land, where many have fallen around us much younger than we are, and we must expect to follow, nor can the solemn day be very distant at most. I heard of your bereavement, and was glad to learn that your son was favoured to leave very satisfactory witness of his having obtained mercy of the God of heaven before he left this mortal scene. This I am sure would be a great support to your mind, under the solemn stroke by which he in a moment commenced a new mode of existence of which we here can form but very imperfect ideas, and indeed can know no more than we can learn by faith in the Holy Scriptures.

Of what inexpressible value is the book of God! What a dark residence must this world have been without the sacred record. To the unbelieving world all futurity is total darkness. Paul represents the heathen as having *no hope*, and they who have a bible they do not believe, are as blind as they who have no bible to believe. Revelation draws aside the veil of future worlds, and affords a glimpse of a heaven to come for the righteous, and a hell for the ungodly. We walk through this life by faith, and not by sight: 2 Cor. v. 7. All our knowledge of heavenly things is let into our minds through faith in what God has said in his word concerning them.

All expectations are built thereon, for faith is the firm confidence of things *hoped* for, and the sure evidence of things unseen. It realized the things revealed, by bringing them into experience, so that their weight and influence are felt in the mind and conscience, and a degree of pleasure is raised in the soul through the power of the Holy Spirit applying them by faith. Thus the God of hope fills us with joy and peace in believing, that we may abound in hope through the power of the Holy Ghost: Rom. xv. 13.

That there is a heaven we are sure by the testimony of truth. Christ taught his disciples to pray to their Father who is in heaven: and said that he himself came from heaven, and that he was about to ascend up where he was before: John vi. 62, 38. The Hebrews knew in themselves that they had in heaven a better and an enduring substance: Heb. x. 34. And so it is further said of our blessed Lord, that, "he is not entered into the holy places made with hands, which are the figures of the true; but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God for us:" Heb. ix. 24. "In my Father's house," said he, "are many mansions." Thus we come to know *by believing* such testimony, that there is a heaven to enter, and an inheritance is reserved in heaven. Peter says, "*For you* who are kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time." But *faith* is needful to believe this record, or the preparation made would never be known *really*, nor enjoyed *savingly*.

We walk by faith, as to *who* and *what* are in heaven. We have had no sight of them, but then we see and know them to be there by faith. We know that not only Christ is there, but that the spirits of the just made perfect are there. We know that some of the vilest are there; this is shewn in the person of the thief who had the Saviour's promise of being with him in paradise that same day. Still all this is only known to believers who live and walk by faith. This faith looks into heaven by the telescope of the gospel.

"Faith is the brightest evidence,
Of things beyond our sight.
Breaks through the clouds of flesh and sense,
And dwells in heavenly light."

As to the way to heaven, and the ground on which we

B b

must enter there, this is only known by faith. The works of creation say nothing about this. The wisdom of man has never discovered this. Only the gospel has brought this life and immortality to light; and only by faith can we benefit by the gospel word. An unbelieving gospel is an uninfluential gospel. Edward Rowell knows this. I may say as John the apostle did to his friends: "I have not written to you because ye know not the truth, but because ye know it; and no lie is of the truth:" 1 John ii. 21. Therefore he would encourage them to abide in the same to the end.

We walk by faith and not by sight, as to the many trials that await us. By faith we know they are appointed of God for our good, and that we shall be helped to bear them, and to obtain deliverance from them: 1 Thess. iii. 3; 1 Cor. x. 13. Let us aim, my friend, to live as near home as possible. Let us *pray* our passage, as it is plain that we cannot *pay* it. We have not far to go now. Watch against an over anxious mind about earthly affairs. We must soon leave them; the next world has the highest claim to our hearts, and is the fittest object for our hopes. Pray much—meditate on the best subjects, such as set Christ always before you. Look upon death as disarmed through the death of Christ. Aim to live at Calvary, and this will fit you to die there. My days must be few, I may never see you again in the flesh, but you will I hope often see my Master; you know my faith and manner of converse, and we have long since met in sentiment in all the chief things of the kingdom. I see many on the change, many are changed, whether with profit to themselves or others, time may prove. I hope to love all who love our Lord, even when I see no prospect of real usefulness in joining with some measures which greatly please others. But I am nobody, and can act but little further, though I hope to endure to the end, and expire in his arms who is bringing his ransomed home. Believe me,

Yours affectionately in Jesus,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 144.

To MR. C.

On the death of his Daughter.

May 5, 1846.

My tried Brother,

The Lord is doing great things for you, while it may seem that all these things that are befalling you are utterly against you. I believe no such thing, but reckon they are all for you, are all sent in mercy, and will work under grace for your good. It is a time of Samuel's trial, but he shall be saved out of it. The Lord knows what he is doing with his poor servant, nor has he forgotten anything that he has said to you. You *now*, my brother, have not an *unnecessary* cross laid upon you, nor will the God of your hope overload you: 1 Cor. x. 13. He only designs to prove how frail you are, and how sufficient his grace is to sustain you. He has, it would seem, something further for you to do, which requires you to be disciplined in severe exercise, in order for you to perform his work, or suffer his will, in a way suited to honour him, and profit his people, as well as to enlarge your own experience.

It is recorded twice over, that *God is love*. This then must be true, must be always true; for he cannot deny himself. He can adopt no measures in his providential dealings which would be inconsistent with his love to his people. He loved Job no less when he stripped him of his large family and property, than he did when he first gave him them. In all his dealings with his servants he seeks their good to edification, while they are too apt to seek their gratification, which accounts for their discontent under the ways of the Lord toward them.

I make no doubt but you had often prayed in effect that your beloved daughter might be finally taken to heaven, and perhaps had encouraged her to seek her best home there. As the Lord, you now conclude, has done as you requested, your place is to give thanks for his gracious answer to your urgent intreaties. How hard is it for us poor mortals to act consistently! You cannot see how many and great are the sorrows and sufferings which she has escaped, through an early death in Christ! What pangs her continuing here might through unforeseen events have exposed *you* to endure

it is not for us to know; but as she is gathered from the evil to come, and received to heavenly rest, and endless joy and peace; you *may* give thanks, but *must not* say much about your loss: but rather rejoice in her gain. You are called to love and serve him more cheerfully, who has shewn such favour to a member of your family. You had no right in her that would bear naming against his right, who had not only *lived* for her, *obeyed* for her, and *prayed* for her more successfully than you could; but he had *died* for her, and *prepared* an everlasting mansion of bliss for her in the highest heavens of imperishable glory! O be thankful.

How indulgent is the dispensation, my brother; your daughter, might have been taken from you in total darkness, without a ray of hope for her future welfare. Even then you would have been bound to hold your peace, as did our brother Aaron, when his two disorderly and presumptuous sons were both smitten dead in his sight. "It is the Lord," said Eli; and this seemed to subdue his mind. "I," said David, "was dumb because *thou* didst it." I trust the Lord will strengthen your heart, to give up all you have; this will lessen your trial, and prepare you to rejoice in tribulation that ministers to your ability to glorify his name in all you undergo, as his dependent servant. If God, as revealed in Christ, be honoured by your life, labour, and patient suffering, a right end is answered in your being; and while you are mindful of his crown, he will never forget your diadem. God be with you, my brother, always, and through all your troubles, even as he has promised; so prays,
Your sincere friend in Jesus,

JOHN STEVENS.

LETTER 145.

To Mrs. C. S.

Aug. 31, 1847.

My highly esteemed and tried Sister in Christ,

The most high God has signally favoured you in bringing you safely through one of the most stormy seasons allotted for frail mortals in this world of sorrows and pains. Bitter indeed has been your cup, but after the manner of our suffering Saviour, I trust you have been helped to say,

or will be strengthened to say, "The cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" "Shall we receive good at the hand of the Lord," said Job, "and shall we not receive evil?" The evil of sin is ours, but the evil of suffering is by his hand. He wisely uses the latter to correct the former, and hence our afflictions are among our great mercies.

The mighty hand of God has sustained you thus far, without leaving you any reason to question his ability and willingness to conduct you through all the future way. Scenes yet unthought of by you may be approaching, but his kind hand will sustain you through all. Your times are in his hand, and he calls you to cast your care upon him, at the same time promising to deliver you, and that you shall glorify him: Psa. l. 15. You glorify him when you make him your trust, and ascribe all your deliverances to his hand. "In all your ways acknowledge him, and he will direct your steps." Make him your friend by calling frequently upon him, and opening all your heart unto him, and you will have little ground to fear who may be your foe. Certain scriptures are now more immediately your right, wherein the Lord has engaged himself to be the widow's friend and protector. Thus saith the Lord,—Leave thy fatherless children, I will preserve them alive; and let thy widows trust in me. He relieveth the fatherless and the widow. "He will establish the border of the widow:" Prov. xv. 25. "I will be a swift witness against those that oppress the widow and the fatherless:" Mal. iii. 5. A widow indeed trusteth in God: 1 Tim. v. 5. "A father of the fatherless, and a judge of the widow is God in his holy habitation:" Psa. lxxviii. 5. Again, "Ye shall not afflict any widow, or fatherless child. If thou afflict them in any wise, and they cry at all unto me, I will surely hear their cry, and my wrath shall wax hot, and I will kill you with the sword, and your wives shall be widows, and your children fatherless:" Exod. xxii. 22—24. Hence you will learn the care of God for the widow, and see how you are encouraged to trust in God at all times, to maintain your rights against any power that may rise against you. She is well preserved whom God will defend.

Every state on earth has its peculiar trials. You may reasonably expect difficulties in new forms; but be not dismayed; as thy day so shall thy help and strength be. And

"Not one single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit."

Watch and pray, and observe the hand of the Lord in the events of life, and aim to draw some directions therefrom. Take warning by the follies and faults of others. Frequent the means of grace, for they promote a healthiness of soul. Remember, God has solemnly visited you; he has called you to look forward and anticipate the future. I forbear to touch on the painful trials past, not thinking it would be profitable, and *memory* will supply enough from that quarter, without any rehearsal on my part. The few preceding remarks are offered sympathetically for Christ's sake and in his name, by

Your affectionate Pastor,

JOHN STEVENS.

Mrs. S. unites in kindest regards and good wishes on your behalf.

He hath said, "*I will never leave thee.*"

LETTER 148.

TO MRS. RICHARDS.

June 8, 1810.

My dear Relative,

So many days have passed since I heard from you, that I cannot ascertain the number. Oft have I thought of you in the interim; but I must own it has been only as the parsimonious think of generosity; viz., without imparting any thing. On the other hand, I cannot say that your importunate solicitations, or your moving declarations, have in the least disturbed my negligence, or prompted me in the least to action. You will probably say, "I cannot write any thing worth sending so far abroad." But if such consideration were allowed to bound my actions, you very probably would hear no more of me on this side eternity.

Musing on the ways of God toward me, and the various paths in which I had been conducted, I recollected that this very morning was the remembrancer of one thirty-four years back,—a morning to be remembered, as it gave me birth into this world of creatures, without which I could never

have possessed a prospect of immortal and supernal felicity. I have often said, that to me, under conviction of my forlorn estate by nature, it were impossible to say to my Maker, I thank thee for my creation, unless I could discern my final salvation. Without this, I must have concluded in the words of my adorable Lord, that "it had been good for that man if he had not been born."

Truly I may say, "What hath God wrought?" and my answer must be, "He hath done great things for me, whereof I am glad." What changes and overturnings, my dear relative, have taken place under the all-wise providence of our God, since that morning when my infant lungs first heaved with the subtle air of this sublunary world! My dear mother! what unexpected events have borne her far away from that elected spot of my nativity! Alas! how truly hidden and inscrutable are the ways of the Almighty! Who would have once imagined that my heavy-laden father, grown grey with years and cares, and surrounded with so numerous a family, was destined to take up his abode in London,—to be hurried from a poor pitiful village to the greatest city in Europe! Well might King Solomon say, "Boast not of to-morrow, for thou knowest not what a day may bring forth."

Poor old Aldwinkle! what art thou become? an empty place indeed! There once my heart had objects dear, but nothing now remains, save the naked spot of earth and some surrounding scenes, serving only to remind my spirit of former times and absent friends, whom other places now possess, or else eternity has received them to their final home. I have at different seasons thought I could like, once more, to review those places where my infant days were spent, and where my God first touched my untaught, sinful soul, and drew me to the throne of mercy, where many times I found a pleasure I am unable fully to define. What an awful character — appears to be, if conduct be any guide to a judgment being formed. I am glad my father is removed nearer the ark of God, or to where, I trust, he will ever have some opportunities of hearing more gospel than Aldwinkle would afford in its most highly favoured days.

..... We are at this time all mercifully well in health, except myself. I am not quite right in my bodily feelings, having suffered severely with spasms in my stomach. I

have been once or twice so extremely bad, that I have thought it probable my days were about ended. O how plainly does the emptiness of this world appear when heavy sorrows overtake the body; and sweet is the hope of immortality to the mind, when it feels a crazy tabernacle falling to pieces, or troubled with racking pain. O! that my future years, if years for me are appointed, may be spent with honour to my God, profit and pleasure to myself, and to the dear church of Christ. Much of my little time has been thrown away, or wasted in trifles. I never expect to arrive at satisfaction till I can serve my Lord according to his holy, perfect will. But to press toward the mark for the prize is my incumbent duty, and must therefore be my advantage. I certainly continue to enjoy much pleasure in my work, and hope I may say that I eat not my morsels alone. I have often sad hours hanging heavy upon me; but thanks be to my compassionate God, my hope is never slain nor disabled from action. I am tempted by my wicked heart to almost all evil; but thanks be to my preserving Lord, I am kept from feeding on the devil's dainties.

I need not repeat what you daily know by sad experience. Yet it is common, you know, to tell each other it is a rainy or a fine day. The remark seems harmless enough; and so will mine be safe enough, if I say, you live in a dry and thirsty land where no water is. Yet you have a copy of God's thoughts, and of the thoughts of good men in ancient days; of the world's thoughts, the devil's thoughts, and of your own thoughts. This book is a "precious treasure," as Mr. Newton says. You have also a throne of grace, and a heart full of matter to present there. You have also the Lord the Spirit to help you under your infirmities, and who has engaged to perfect you in all the will of the Triune God. You have also a stock of experimental knowledge; the fruits of several years' trading, toil, and suffering. You have, I expect, a saint or two who can in measure understand your language, though I suppose they are slow of speech. With these and other helps of the like kind, as a daily cross, a tempting devil, a little faith, a lively hope, &c., I trust you will be brought through the desert in safety.

The Lord speed your passage, and crown your exit.

Yours in double bonds,

JOHN STEVENS.

THE FAITHFUL MINISTER DISCHARGED TO
HIS REST.

Lines expressive of the writer's thoughts on receiving intelligence of the decease of MR. JOHN STEVENS. Sympathizing with the bereaved church at "Salem," the author has penned them as if he were one of their number.

SERVANT of God, go up,
Possess the promis'd rest;
Finish'd thy toil, thy faith, thy hope,
Go, and be fully blest.

Roam o'er the plains on high,
Pluck fruit from living trees,
Drink of the crystal founts of joy,
Recline on seats of ease.

Gaze on the unveil'd throne,
Behold "the Lamb once slain,"
Wearing the crown he makes thy own,
Sing his triumphant name.

Awake, with well-taught hand,
The harp of gladsome sound,
And tell to all the ransom'd band,
The mercy thou hast found.

Companion with the good,
The noble and the wise,
Who joy that through redeeming blood,
Their dignities arise.

In patriarchs of old,
In saints of later fame,
Brethren and equal friends behold,
Thy rank and theme the same.

To them thy bosom vent,
Thy glowing thoughts unfold;
In mighty words and eloquent,
Extol the grace untold.

No tear shall dim thy eye,
No care thy mind depress,
No faithless friend command a sigh,
No enemy distress.

Dwell with thy Lord and Friend,
Bask in his radiant love,
Pleasure and peace which ne'er shall end,
Find in thy home above.

Bereft and left below,
We mourn, but not for thee,
Nor blame the hand that struck the blow,
Though keen our smarting be.

"Burning and shining light,"
Strong in the truth and sound,
Rich in experience, brave in fight,
Where shall thy like be found?

To him who gifted thee,
And call'd thee by his grace,
We look in hope our friend he'll be,
And bid one fill thy place.

Thy light and mental parts,
That one may not possess;
Yet, "taught of God," may cheer our hearts,
And feed in righteousness.

To truth we would adhere,
To God's appointments stand,
His will obey in faith and fear,
And journey hand in hand.

Ere long we one by one,
From earth shall pass away,
And meet thee near the sun-girt throne,
Nor dread a parting day.

Thanks to eternal love,
Through Jesus' "precious blood;"
All saints shall reach the heights above,
And ever be with God.

W. H. BONNER.

Bermondsey, October, 1847.

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